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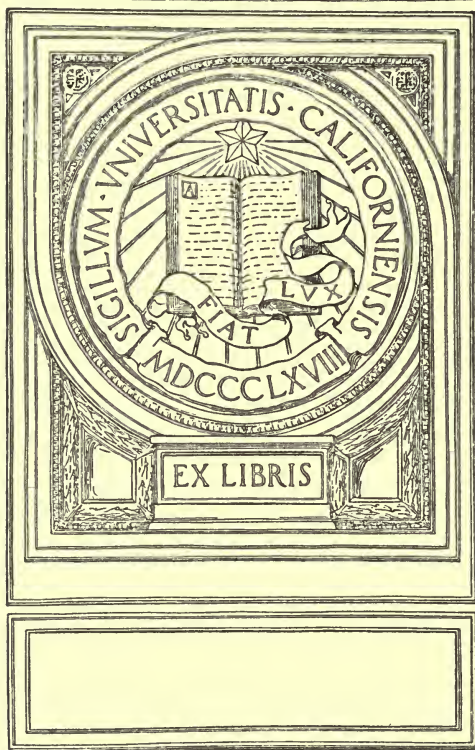
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PRACTICAL • AUTHORSHIP



# PRACTICAL AUTHORSHIP

BY

JAMES KNAPP REEVE

A WORK DESIGNED TO AFFORD WRITERS AN  
INSIGHT INTO CERTAIN TECHNICAL, COM-  
MERCIAL, AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF  
THE PROFESSION OF LETTERS AS FOL-  
LOWED BY THE GENERAL WRITER  
FOR CURRENT PUBLICATION



THE EDITOR PUBLISHING COMPANY

Publishers of text-books and magazines for authors

150 NASSAU STREET : : : NEW YORK CITY

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**The Outing Press**  
DEPOSIT, N. Y.

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# CONTENTS

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## CHAPTER I

Literary Beginnings—Preparation for Literary Work—The Writer's Relations with Editors—Short Story and Verse Writers—The Many Avenues for Literary Employment—Studying the Varied Needs of Publications—Why Manuscripts are Rejected—Causes of Failure—Editing One's Own MSS. Pages 1 to 9

## CHAPTER II

Literature as a Profession—Industry and Business Acumen Needful for Success—Practice Perfects—The Mind Developed and Strengthened by Application—Writing for Practice—Study for Condensation—Models for Style—What Writers Should Read—The Matter More Important Than the Manner—Hours for Work—The Writer His Own Editor. Pages 10 to 22

## CHAPTER III

Editors the Friends of Writers—Their Consideration for New Aspirants—Help Editors by Doing Your Work Properly—How to Prepare and Send your MS.—Don't Send Needless Letters—Type Copy is Preferred—The *Nom de plume*—Don't Presume on Editors. Pages 23 to 29

## CHAPTER IV

Tools of the Craft—Studying the Dictionary—List of Valuable Text Books—Keeping Clippings for Reference—Scrap Books—Note Books—Files of Journals—The Subject Book. Pages 30 to 37

## CHAPTER V

A Stepping Stone—The Training Valuable for Future Literary Work—Newspaper English—The Newspaper a Daily Magazine—Division of Labor—Necessary Qualities for a Reporter—How to Write a News Story—Valuable Knowledge and Acquaintance—Famous Correspondents—Compensation—The Reporter's Field—Examples of Reportorial Work. Pages 38 to 45



## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER VI

The Short Story—Model Short Stories—The New Writer Welcome—Qualities of the Successful Short Story—Love Stories Always Popular—Action—Length—Sad Stories not Desired—“True Stories” not Good Fiction—Rapid or Slow Composition—Fashions in Fiction—Statements of Publishers’ Needs—Timeliness in Fiction. Pages 46 to 56

## CHAPTER VII

The Literary Hack—His Wide Field—Goldsmith’s Description—The Knowledge and Ability Required—How Large Incomes are Earned—Various Lines of Work—Drawbacks—Analysis of Income. Pages 57 to 64

## CHAPTER VIII

The Specialist—What he has Accomplished in Other Fields—His Place in Literature—What he may Achieve—The Varied Lines for the Specialist—The Training of the Specialist. Pages 65 to 69

## CHAPTER IX

The Descriptive Article—Qualities Necessary to a Descriptive Writer—The Wide Field for his Work—Newspapers and Magazines use such Articles—Subjects Found on Every Hand and in Every-day Life. Pages 70 to 73

## CHAPTER X

Verse-writing—Young Writers Incline toward Poetry—Amateurs Deluge Editors with Poor Verses—Offerings Greatly in Excess of Demands—The Market Limited—The Sort of Work Wanted—Prices Paid. Pages 74 to 79

## CHAPTER XI

The Trade Journal—A Profitable Field—Qualifications of an Industrial Writer—How to Begin with such Work—List of Industrial Journals that Buy Material—Correspondence for Trade Journals—Fashion and Commercial Work. Pages 80 to 84

## CHAPTER XII

The Humorist—Joke-writing as a Profession—An Important Branch of Literary Work—The Heights and Depths of Humorous Writing—The Publications that use Humor—What They Want and What They Pay. Pages 85 to 90

## CHAPTER XIII

The Agricultural Press—Good Training Ground for New Writers—Branches of Work Allied to Agriculture—Practical Work at a Premium. Pages 91 to 93

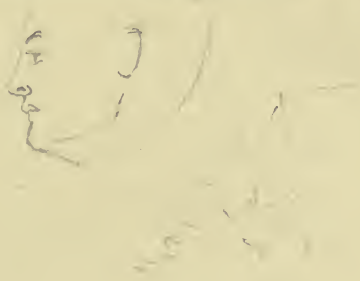
# CONTENTS

vii

The following short chapters, XIV to XXV, inclusive, are editorials written by the author for his journal at various times; and are given place here as they seem to carry in condensed form just the information that writers would seek under these heads:

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIV Choosing a Market - - - - -	94
XV The Typewriter - - - - -	97
XVI Preparing Copy - - - - -	100
XVII The Question of Timeliness - - - - -	102
XVIII Syndicates - - - - -	105
XIX The Ethics of Postage - - - - -	107
XX A Neglected Field - - - - -	109
XXI Articles of Information - - - - -	111
XXII The Literary Critic - - - - -	113
XXIII The Value of Work - - - - -	115
XXIV The Profession of Authorship - - - - -	118
XXV The Writer of Travel - - - - -	124
*XXVI Song Words and Hymn Writing - - - - -	127
XXVII Don'ts for Writers - - - - -	133
XXVIII The Literary Market - - - - -	135
XXIX Getting Into Print - - - - -	140

\*Contributed by Prof. Will Earhart.





# PRACTICAL AUTHORSHIP

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## CHAPTER I

Literary Beginnings—Preparation for Literary Work—The Writer's Relations with Editors—Short Story and Verse Writers—The Many Avenues for Literary Employment—Studying the Varied Needs of Publications—Why Manuscripts are Rejected—Causes of Failure—Editing One's Own MSS.

**T**HOROUGH preparation for literary work is most desirable; but how few, in determining to enter upon a literary career, give to this any thought or attention. The young man or woman just out of school, the woman of fashion, the weary housewife, the professional man or the man of business, may conclude that he or she possesses undeveloped literary talent, and forthwith prepares to enter the arena. We say "prepares," but rather the entry into the arena is without preparation of any sort. The tyro does not understand why he is not as competent to write for editors and for the public as Jones, who appears to be successful in that line, whom he knows well and is very certain is no smarter than himself. That point of view may be correct, but he overlooks the fact that Jones has served an apprenticeship of many years. The beginner should ask himself if he is willing to do the same, and if not, would better resign his literary ambitions at once.

When the time arrives that men and women who wish to become writers will look upon the idea exactly as they would upon that of becoming a blacksmith, or an artist, or an opera singer, there will be fewer incompetents knocking at editorial doors. When they realize that training is all-important, that success is to be expected only after this training, and as the result of concentrated effort and experience; that any other success is phenomenal and unusual; and that this course pursued with great patience, allied to some amount of inherent aptitude and ability will bring a measure of success, then writing will be a less sad business all around.

That a literary worker is upon an especially high and isolated plane of intellectual life, separate from and above all those whose

professions have called them into other paths for their life work, is a false idea; and the earlier in a writer's career that his mind becomes freed from such an impression the better will he fare in his intercourse with the world in general—and with editors in particular.

And here at the outset we strike the key-note of our whole subject—The Editor!—for it is the editor, in general and in particular, who must be considered at the very beginning by one embarking upon the career of a writer for the press. Make a study of the editor and his needs, make it the business of your life to understand them, and you will at least have entered on the right road.

That manuscript which to its author represents a labor of love and the inspiration of genius is among the editors a purely commercial commodity. A literary publication, to succeed, must have: first, reading matter, for which it must pay; second, advertisements, for which it is paid. Now, here is an example in cause and effect. The circulation of the magazine will depend on the interest the public takes in the reading matter; and the advertising will depend upon the circulation so acquired. Therefore, it is the object of every editor to set forth a table of contents that will appeal to the largest possible constituency. If your story or poem or essay will help him toward this end, then he wants it, and is willing to make you due compensation. If it will not help him toward this end, he does not want it, at any price nor under any circumstances. There you have the whole thing in a nut-shell. Its value depends upon how much he thinks it will profit his publication. Of course he may err in his judgment, but he is very likely to know much more about it than you do, or than can any man whose experience has not been acquired in an editorial chair.

It is well to realize also that the law of supply and demand governs the manuscript market, as it does the market for every other article of commerce, whether the product of genius or of brawn. One publication in the United States is said to receive 36,000 manuscripts annually. It can use at the most two hundred and fifty. Another receives about the same number, some one hundred manuscripts daily. Its monthly issues contain an average of less than thirty articles; hence, there remains daily an over-supply of at least ninety-nine contributions which, regardless of merit, must be returned to their authors. Not wholly regardless of merit,



either! The fact may be accepted that the really poor material is certain to go back. All the other has a chance. The better one has made his work, the better *its* chance for being one of the two accepted out of the fifty.

We have known young writers, or rather those who are ambitious to become writers, but are not yet quite in the ranks, to ask editors what they should write about! Editors do not care in the least what you shall write about. If you are not sufficiently impelled toward some one thing, some one central thought or idea, some one branch of literary work to take that up and study it, and evolve from it something of consequence, you would better not attempt to write at all. If you have a distinct trend toward any line of thought, and can express yourself clearly thereupon in good form, then your work is indicated plainly enough.

As a rule, letters of the sort indicated above are not answered. They signify that the writer has no conception of what literary work really is, no training, no ideas, and not very much common-sense. It is not the business of an editor to select topics and give them out, as a schoolmaster may to his class in composition; but it is his business to examine that which is offered, and select such as best meets the needs of his publication.

The average young writer inclines first toward fiction. The short story has more devotees than all other lines of literary effort combined; but it is also worth noting that the short story fills a considerable space in the great majority of periodicals. Yet, while avenues for the publication of the short story are practically unlimited, the offerings of such material are always greatly in excess of editors' needs. The really good short story is constantly in demand, and it may safely be asserted that the writer who can produce such is assured of a hearing; but poor short stories deluge every editorial office in the country; and-if you can only do the poor or mediocre story you would better let it entirely alone.

Next to story-writers in number stand the poets. Verses—we will not dignify them by the name of poetry—are a nuisance in the offices of all classes of publications. Silly, senseless, imperfect rhyming, sent out by would-be poets who do not understand the first elements of prosody, and who are too ignorant of their attempted vocation even to be able to qualify themselves by study, make up the vast bulk of these offerings. Far better would it be to consign all such effusions to the waste-basket, rather than squan-

der postage and needlessly trouble editors. But that there is a demand for good verse, as for all other good literary material, is true, and in another place we shall recur again and at more length to this subject.

The avenues into which the young writer may direct his talents, provided he has versatility as well as ability, are almost beyond number. A few of them may be indicated as follows:

The agricultural press offers the widest scope for writers who understand the processes of skilled husbandry, of horticulture, of floriculture, or who are familiar with any of the aspects of rural life. The student of natural history has for his field almost every journal in the country, for there are few editors who are not alert to place before their readers informing articles upon the wonders of the universe. One who understands the use of tools, who knows how ores are mined and smelted, how leather is tanned, how cotton is ginned and baled and pressed, who has information regarding any practical and prosaic industry of our daily life, may find an avenue for what he has to say upon it in the trade or technical journal or in the columns of the newspapers. The housewife who understands the care of a window garden, the making of delicate preserves, the refined arts of housewifery, may speak upon these things through the various household and domestic journals, and in the special department devoted to the affairs of the household, which is a feature of many newspapers and magazines.

The teacher, through her pen and the press, especially by aid of the educational journals, can find a larger school than that afforded by the occupants of the benches in his school-room. Through the religious journals the preacher can reach a vaster congregation than ever assembled within sound of human voice. The man who rejoices in out-of-door life, in the strength and skill of leg and arm, in the use of gun and rod, may tell of the life that he knows best, through the various journals devoted to the sportsman. Nor will the leading magazines look upon his work askance, especially if it is accompanied by good material for illustration. The humorist, the man whose profession it is to look upon the bright side of life, who can evolve a quip or a joke from the common affairs of the day, is welcomed by the editors of our comic journals, and has a place reserved for him in many of our most sedate publications. The traveler who ventures far afield may, in the pages of our best magazines, in the columns of the daily news-

papers and through almost every journal that is published, tell of his journeyings and adventures in the strange nooks and corners of this round earth.

The manner in which a writer may choose his work has been indicated. If he is sufficiently versatile to work along many lines, and if sufficiently practical to work with a definite purpose, so that he does not fritter away his energies, his task of earning at least a livelihood from literature should be, comparatively, an easy one. Whether he will do more than this depends upon his force and the amount of gray matter in his brain. A lazy man will not accomplish much in any walk of life. As to the rest—a man may be a traveler and a writer of travel, and able to tell clearly and intelligently of that which his eyes have seen. If he can do so much, he will probably be a welcome space writer upon the newspapers and acceptable as a contributor to the minor magazines. But if he can adorn his subject with the charm and graces of style which made the work of the lamented Theodore Child the envy of lesser men who aspired to be writers of travel, he may hope both for fame and ample financial emoluments.

Having chosen one's line of work, the next step will be to determine the publications for which one will endeavor to fit this work. (It is not often wise, except for the man of genius or already famous author, to write at random.) We mean by this to put one's self at work on any article, of any style or length, upon any topic which may come to mind, without first having a more or less definite idea of one or more publications for which it might be especially available. For instance, one might be an enthusiastic sportsman. His inclination and information might suggest to him that he prepare an article upon tarpon fishing along the Florida coast. But if he has no idea of publications which use articles of that character, he would better not waste his time writing one. Further, such an article, of 1,500 to 2,500 words, might be acceptable to a newspaper. If exceptionally well done it might run to 4,000 or 5,000 words, and be acceptable to one of the illustrated magazines. But if the writer overlooked only this one point of length, and, being a close student of the piscatorial art, permitted his inclinations free play to the extent of embellishing his article with erudite information, with scientific dissertations upon the species, with a technical analysis of the various rods and reels and tackles to be used in the pursuit of this exceedingly gamy fish, and so elaborated



his article to 10,000 or 15,000 words, he would probably seek in vain for a publisher.

This indicates plainly that the writer should be a student not only of the topics upon which he would write, but of all publications as well which use material of the sort that he proposes to furnish. Of course a writer can hardly be a subscriber to all the leading periodicals of the day; the expense of such a method of securing this information would make rather too serious an inroad upon his earnings. But, if possible, he should visit frequently the periodical room of a large library, and there at least glance over all the publications upon its tables. (To do this once or twice a year would hardly suffice.) The changes in the publishing world are constant, and periodicals suffer from the same vicissitudes to which other branches of trade are liable. Magazines come and go, and that which is to-day shall not be to-morrow. (At least once a month the writer should refresh his information and memory regarding the avenues of publication.

One of the most disheartening experiences for the literary beginner is the return of manuscripts with the little slip which explains nothing beyond the fact that that particular manuscript is not wanted by the particular editor to whom it has been offered.

It requires some time for a young writer to understand that this is a regular part and process of the business of authorship. One who always takes the rejection of a manuscript to imply that his offering is unworthy, or who feels that it is intended as a mark of discouragement, has an entirely wrong view of the matter. We have known promising writers to give up all attempts at literary work, only because they could not endure such slings and arrows of an untoward fortune. Some of these, had they persisted, would undoubtedly in the course of time have accomplished much good work.

A great many attempts have been made to explain why editors use such a very noncommittal rejection form, and why it is almost impossible to get them to make any comment at all upon a rejected manuscript. The usual rejection slip runs something like this:

"The editor regrets that the enclosed manuscript, which has been kindly submitted for use in his magazine, is not in line with its present needs. With thanks for the courtesy of permitting us the pleasure of its perusal, we are,  
"\_\_\_\_\_,"

This tells one absolutely nothing. Your manuscript may be

wholly worthless, it may be the product of ignorance, or of crass stupidity; or it may be the highly finished product of an intelligent brain—material in every way worthy of publication, even worthy of place in that particular journal to which it was offered. If it belongs in the former category, the editor is too courteous to explain its shortcomings. If he did so, he might wound the feelings of one whom he certainly does not care to wound, or might involve himself in correspondence or controversy. An editor who ventures upon the criticism of any manuscript is very apt to hear from the writer again, and so be placed under the necessity of explaining his strictures. Very few editors have the time to give from their duties to such personal correspondence. And the editor rightly argues it is not his business to pose as a critic except so far as may concern the wants of his own publication. He may be even no better judge of the needs of other publications than is the writer of the story or article. For this reason he sometimes ventures to close his note of declination with the courteous hope that the material offered will be found in line with the needs of some other journal.

If the manuscript belongs in the second category, it is then not a question of merit, but of availability. The article or story may be thoroughly good, but not of the sort that is used by that magazine. Or it may be of the right sort, but not timely. Or it may be of the right sort and timely, but something else, which covers the same ground, may already have been accepted—something which, in short, has pre-empted the place that this might have had.

It may be some balm to the over-sensitive young writer to know that most of those who afterward became great writers passed through the same experience of editorial declinations. Mr. Howells has told us how he hoped to be a poet, and how his verses came back. Mr. Kipling's "Plain Tales" were refused by a publishing house which may well pride itself upon the few mistakes of that sort made in its long and honorable career. The writer who can say honestly that he has never known this particular form of discouragement in the whole course of his career would certainly be an exception, and any who would venture upon such a statement would, we fear, not be generally credited by those who know the ins and outs of the literary life.

But while we recognize the fact that declinations are a part of our lot, we are all willing to dispense with these as far as possible.



The one thing that will help toward this end more than all others—provided, of course, one has worthy material to offer—is to learn to place one's work in the right directions. Many a heartache may be avoided if the young writer will give good heed to this suggestion.

Incompetence and carelessness are two chief causes that operate toward the failure of writers.

Regarding the first of these not much is to be said—at least not much that is worth saying here. For if one is illiterate or lacking in mental qualifications—and it sometimes happens that such an one will show a tendency to immortalize himself in print—the best thing that can be done is to show him gently, but speedily and firmly, the error of his ways.

But granted that one has a fair knowledge of English, at least average mental qualifications, and some ability in the way of expression, there still remains the great stumbling block of carelessness to be avoided.

Reverting again to incompetence, we do not wish to be understood as implying that this cannot to some degree be overcome. If one's education has been neglected in youth, study and application in later life may do much to remedy the evil. Writing is in itself an educator, and one who writes much and writes carefully will find himself gradually correcting errors and shortcomings. One who sets himself out to improve will meet with encouragement and will deserve success.

But one who is already gifted with the required attributes of a writer, yet through carelessness fails to do the best possible, does not deserve much either of sympathy or help. Carelessness in a writer is the one thing which editors will not look upon complacently. A manuscript which does not present a neat and legible appearance cannot commend itself. No matter how good the material may be, the editor will reason, and rightly, that this would-be contributor has but a slight regard for his chosen art.

Carelessness in punctuation, in the use of capitals, in the choice of words, and in the formation of sentences, means that much labor is entailed upon the editor if the article is accepted and printed. From the manuscripts that continually drift into editorial offices it would seem that some writers are still of the opinion that it is the business of the editor to edit. This is not often the case. The province of an editor nowadays is to examine authors'

manuscripts and to select those that will best meet the needs of his journal.

The editor is usually a busy man. If he should select for each number of his journal two or three or four manuscripts that require careful editing throughout, he would find that this labor encroached severely on the time demanded for other duties. So he has come to reason that a writer should practice his art as perfectly as possible. The latter should not depend upon the editor to discover his lapses, nor to amend them, but he should be his own editor.

When the manuscript leaves the author's hand it should be ready for the printer. This will go a long way toward insuring its acceptance. It is simply a statement of fact to say that editors are constantly returning many manuscripts that in all probability were otherwise acceptable, only because a glance has shown that to edit them properly would require more time and labor than they were warranted in giving.

## CHAPTER II

Literature as a Profession—Industry and Business Acumen Needful for Success—Practice Perfects—The Mind Developed and Strengthened by Application—Writing for Practice—Study for Condensation—Models for Style—What Writers Should Read—The Matter More Important than the Manner—Hours for Work—The Writer His Own Editor.

IT has been well said that literature is a good crutch but a poor staff. Freely translated, this means that the writer should not often, especially at the very outset of his career, hope to make literature his sole employment, nor to secure a livelihood from its practice as a profession. No matter what success one may meet with at the beginning, it is not less true in this than in the vocations of the artist and the statuary, that "art is long." In this, as in other lines of work where men must toil, and win their way by force and persistence, one must serve an apprenticeship, and by constant practice grow in his profession; this practice not seldom extends through a lifetime before one finds that his chosen and loved occupation will afford him a satisfactory sustenance, and so obviate the necessity of employing any portion of his time in other and less congenial pursuits.

We have but to look over the history of letters in modern times to discover that many, even of those who have been classed as great among writers, did not live by the pen alone. We know that Hawthorne was glad to have his friend Pierce give him a place in the Salem Custom House, and thus relieve him from the strain and burden of depending wholly upon the magic pen that created the "Marble Faun" and the "Scarlet Letter," to provide for the necessities of life in his modest household. Lamb, gentlest and quaintest among English essayists, has told humorously of the purgatory of that high stool at his desk in the India House, where the pen that gave to us the immortal "Essays of Elia" was employed upon the dull pages of heavy ledgers. These instances could be multiplied without end, and it is well that the young writer who fondly imagines that glory and riches are to reward his first successful effort, should keep them in mind.

But there is another and more favorable side to the picture,

for it is true that the steady, plodding worker, especially the one who combines business acumen with average literary skill and adaptability, may by constant application secure to himself an income as satisfactory, if not as regular, as the same application and ability would secure for him in other walks of life. The trouble is, however, that few writers will labor so steadily at their tasks as the government employe must at his desk or as the business man will in his own counting-house. The fancy that one is a child of genius and is not subject to the bounds and measures that compass the ordinary mortals, may to some degree account for this. Whatever the reason, it would be difficult to find among the younger literary workers one who honestly obeys Eugene Field's famous prescription for success—"Eight hours' steady work every day." Some wait for the mood, for inspiration. Then if the inspiration does not come they fancy that they have free license for a day or a week away from that work which should be pursued systematically and conscientiously for a certain number of hours, six days in the week.

The incipient genius who does not wish to be thus bound may point to the few who leap at once fully equipped into the arena of letters, and who receive there and then such prompt and complete and substantial recognition that their path is ever after one of flowery ease. But these are only the exceptions which prove the rule. The real genius, he who accomplishes literary success in this manner, appears once in an hundred years—or less. Such rare exceptions do not lessen in any manner the force of the argument that ease and skill in composition, literary technique, concise and dramatic expression, the knowledge of what is wanted and of how to do the things that are wanted; in short, all things that are worthy, are acquired by application.

It matters little what especial direction one's work may take, first efforts will have a certain crudeness which cannot be got rid of by criticism alone, or by the study of models, or by any aid outside one's self. It is not to be denied that criticism and advice may help, but only to the extent of directing the writer toward the paths in which he may best help himself.

Longfellow was a poet from his youth. The poetic instinct was early and strongly developed in him, yet in his mature years he would have been glad to consign to oblivion much that his pen had given to the world before he had schooled himself by assiduous



application and so perfected himself in the gentle art which he had chosen.

Practice perfects! We do not question this in any physical matter. No one pretends to perfection in any handicraft until a long apprenticeship has been served. The painter goes to school and learns, by patiently following the work of the master, all the details of his art, beginning with the mixing of the pigments. But the writer——!

The young writer sometimes thinks it beneath him to pay any attention to such small details as the mixing of the pigments. Words are the writer's pigments, and these he must study to learn their value, their color, their weight, their force, and how they may be blended into that harmonious whole that makes the perfect sentence. The words are all before us, as the colors are all before the painter. But unless we know how to mix the pigments, either in literature or in art, the results will be ever crude and unsatisfactory.

But the writer, you say, cannot always have a master! True. In such case then let him be his own preceptor. Let him write and destroy and write again. Not always the same thing, but ever new ideas, new scenes, new characters should be taken, and with the pen clothed with new literary form. Thus will be acquired facility and diversity. But if one may have a master, let him follow the method of Maupassant, who toiled for seven years in the study of his accepted master, writing little stories that were written only to be destroyed. Month after month, year after year, he submitted his work to the master, only to be told that it was not yet sufficient. But when he did come to his own, what marvelous things did he give to the world! Within the space of a few years three hundred short stories and *feuilletons*, masterpieces of the art of telling a story or drawing a picture in the least possible space! What a reputation he made, and how soon it was all done for! for poor Guy de Maupassant, when his fame had but begun to burgeon, died in a madhouse, because the brain had been overwrought with its marvelous creations.

A young story writer often looks forward with positive dread, fearful that a time will come when all his stories will have been told. Sometimes he endeavors to forecast the future, and is perplexed that he can see no new images rising upon the palimpsest of his brain, to be set forth by him upon the written page. The knowledge that all the stories——particularly all his stories——have



been told, comes upon him with appalling reality. Such fears occur most often during a period when creative work has been suspended. We believe that all writers of fiction will agree that the longer the creative faculties have thus been in disuse the stronger and more real and present becomes this haunting fear. The writer questions if he will ever again be able to conjure those fancies which once came so readily at his bidding. Imagination seems dead, and all those airy visions which once were so wont to delight him and to beckon him on toward fresh fields of trial and accomplishment, are now vanished utterly. Even those whom the world is apt to regard as its most facile writers of stories sometimes find themselves almost in despair because of such thoughts. But when once again they are really at their work, the images of their fancy, the brain-children in which they so delight, arise more quick and fast than ever.

It may be that there was difficulty in getting the fountain started again; thought may have appeared sluggish, and the first attempt was perhaps formless and unsatisfactory; but the next was better and more easily done, and so with the next and the next and the next, until ideas fairly tumbled over one another, so rapidly and so eagerly did they press for utterance. The writing of a single story may start a train of thought that will bring forth a dozen others as rapidly as they can be put upon paper. The more stories one writes, the more will be conjured forward from the recesses of the brain where they have lain hidden.

It is thus that work ever develops the mind and the imagination. The writer who has his harness steadily on is never at a loss for "something to write about." Such a plaint as this is the sign-manual of the writer who has not yet learned the first lesson in his literary primer. If you must search and cudgel your brain for something to write upon, you may be pretty certain that when the thing is done it will prove to have been not very well worth the doing. Real, earnest writers, they who are thoroughly in the work, find their difficulty to be of quite another sort: so many topics continually press upon them that their trouble is to pick and choose from such an embarrassment of riches.

When the thought-waves have been started by actual application to the task in hand, let them come as the water flows from a fountain that is over-full. Do not be afraid of writing too much, but do have a wholesome fear of offering too much for publication.

Write all that you can; put upon paper every thought that is in your mind; then scrutinize closely, destroy that which does not seem to be of your very best, and put aside until it has time to ripen that which you may think good.

Let there be no cessation in your work. It will be more difficult to get started again than, having once begun, to keep right on. Do not be afraid of an accumulation of manuscripts. A writer is hardly seriously in the field unless he has half a hundred manuscripts of various sorts ready for and seeking their proper avenues for publication.

The athlete makes himself still more strong and supple by constant exercise. The pugilist trains and hardens himself rigorously for the conflict. The builder and the machinist toil and perfect themselves in the details of their trades. The painter and the sculptor grow continually, by the accomplishment of each successive task, in the power of expressing their ideas in form and substance. Among all men, it seems that the writer alone hopes to evolve out of his poor little egg-shell of a brain, at once, without practice, application, or training, something that the world shall think of value. The earliest productions of a writer usually deserve the flames—nothing more. Because editors return them as unavailable only shows that editors have a modicum of worldly wisdom. A writer who is discouraged by such refusal, and who is unwilling to take it as a hint that he has yet somewhat to learn before he becomes perfect in an art in which the greatest of the world have striven, deserves only failure.

Much reading, if done conscientiously and observantly, in itself constitutes an excellent means of training and education for the writer. But it must be kept in mind that "Reading maketh the full man, . . . and writing, the exact man." So, no matter how much one may read, the best result in its effect upon his own work will not be obtained unless he also writes much. Write constantly and carefully. Write, even though you have no thought of publication, in order that you may see how your thoughts and ideas look when expressed in words. Get them before you in good type copy, then read, revise and amend until each thought and each sentence stands clear and concise. Strive for absolute perfection in the choice of each word and in the construction of every phrase.

Among the things that one may write for practice rather than for publication are: Short critiques of books read; or, a synopsis

of a paragraph or chapter of a book, or of an article or short story. By practicing this conscientiously one may gain much toward succinctness. In preparing such briefs give the contents, the vital essence, of the paragraph or chapter or story read, and nothing more. After it is written, revise and cut out every superfluous word until you have a compact, but clear and intelligible résumé. In doing this it is well to choose for subjects the work of masters in the various walks of literature. Ruskin may be chosen for style, Addison for clearness, Thackeray for sarcasm, Kipling for originality and strength, and Macaulay for the combination of elegance and strength.

Bacon, who said that he would make all knowledge his, said also of books as follows: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Henry Ward Beecher said: "I read for three things—First, to know what the world has done in the last twenty-four hours and is about to do to-day; second, for the knowledge which I specially want to use in my work; and third, for what will bring my mind into a proper mood."

For a writer all these things are important. He should read to keep pace with the world's work; he should read to increase knowledge, and he should read to bring his mind into that state where it will best be able to perform the work which is demanded from it. Beecher further said that he never read for style, although he thought that one might do so profitably. He commended Herbert Spencer's essay on style as the very best one that he knew, and advised young people to get it, read it and practice it. Beecher stated that he read Burke for fluency, and that he obtained the sense of adjectives out of Barrow.

Dr. Macaulay once remarked that when he was a boy at college he read enthusiastically, but at the foot of every page he stopped and obliged himself to give an account of what he had read on that page. In this manner he early formed the habits of attention and memory.

In regard to reading current publications Webster said: "The magazine is a storehouse, a granary, a cellar, a warehouse in which anything is stored or deposited." Johnson said: "These papers of the day have uses more adequate to the purposes of common life than more pompous and durable volumes!" And Lamartine said: "Before this century shall run out journalism will be the whole



press. Mankind will write their books day by day, hour by hour, page by page."

These opinions are too true and too important to be passed by thoughtlessly. The magazine and the newspaper of to-day have their message for the writer, and may as rightly exert their influence upon his formative period as the accepted classic.

The majority of readers prefer writings in which the language is simple. It is a distinct literary achievement to couch strong, expressive thoughts in simple language and yet make them effective.

Professor Bancroft says: "To attain clearness a writer must have definite thoughts and then express his thoughts in language that his readers may understand as he understands it. The words of the wise are few and well chosen. Scan every sentence, then condense your sentence into clauses, your clauses into phrases, your phrases into words; and if you really do not need the words blot them out."

Ruskin says: "When I was young, if I thought anybody's house was on fire, I said—'Sir, the abode in which you probably passed the delightful years of your youth is in a state of conflagration,' and people called me a good writer then; now they say I cannot write at all, because I say—'Sir, your house is on fire.'"

Young writers often request those who have won their spurs in literature to recommend certain books, or courses of reading and study, that may be pursued as an aid to literary style and ease of expression. In reply the novice is usually told to read "the best authors."

The very wealth of material included in this comprehensive answer makes it difficult to know where to begin. The one who advises along such lines is entirely safe, for no harm can result. The more one reads the best books, and the works of the great masters of literature, the better will he be equipped for any effort toward which he may turn his hand; not only for the literary trade, but he will be a fuller and richer and more competent man for every detail of life.

The company of the great thinkers is in itself a liberal education; but no writer has ever been made through their study alone. If a younger writer should take the work of any single one of the masters, and study it with a view to the element of style, he would run the very serious risk of becoming a mere imitator. Style, as applied to literature, is an intangible but not imperceptible some-

thing. Each man must have it for himself. It must be innate, not acquired. It cannot be taught nor conveyed. True, it may be enriched, improved, made more perfect by constant and careful application; but it must be original or it is of no value.

Swift long ago said that proper words in proper places make the true definition of style. This explanation may be broadened by adding that style is such use of language in the expression of thought as exhibits the spirit and faculty of an artist. Swift's definition might apply most properly to the simple style which is direct and unornamented. The wider one that we have given would find a most complete exemplar in the work of Ruskin.

The study of the masters of style and expression may perhaps be most valuable by observing closely that which they do not do, rather than the converse. The careful reader may readily ascertain in this manner that the style of a great work consists in the avoidance of hyperbole, needless adjectives, redundant phrases, repetition, tautology. Clearness and meaning are best arrived at without these. One element of style consists in the choice of just the one right word where various synonyms would serve more or less perfectly the aim of the writer.

But style of expression is not the only thing to be considered. Unity and sequence in composition are matters which the young writer often does not understand—nor does he understand the necessity of understanding them. There is a proper point at which to begin an article or story. There is a proper sequence of events to follow, and there is a proper place at which to end. In reading and study observe these things, and look upon that which is written in order to determine the manner in which it is written—to decide for yourself whether this be good or bad.

Yes, the advice may safely be given to read the great masters. But read not only those who are great in style, but those as well who are great in ideas and invention and the construction of plot. For first of all a writer must have ideas, and he must then have construction, before his need of style will come into play. Do not make the mistake of putting the last requisite first. We all have known writers who could construct clean and well-rounded sentences, but who had absolutely nothing to say; to advocate for such the study of style, would be holding out to them an *ignis fatuus*.

Among models of construction, Hugo and Thackeray stand in the first rank; for models of style, Ruskin and Kingsley; yet



there are an hundred others who may be read with profit by the young writer. The writer who possesses a style of his own will perhaps never be harmed by reading slipshod work, because he will immediately feel repulsed by it, and will endeavor to make his own method as great a remove from it as possible; but the reading of good work understandingly will have a tendency constantly to perfect and broaden him.

Much is said against the current publications of the day, yet they may still be considered most excellent guides for the young writer. The matter which they contain may not always be good, yet it is almost always carefully edited. While the style may not always appeal to the purists, yet it is modern; it is what our editors and publishers to-day are accepting; and the editors and publishers are the critics, nay, the court of last resort, whom we must have before our mind's eye in our work if we care to reach the eye and ear of the public.

If your literary work is to be anything more than play, the following of a whim, or the employment of idle moments, have as regular hours for it as you would for any other serious undertaking which was to be pursued from day to day.

Preferably the morning hours should be given to literary composition. It is then that the brain is clearest, the mind most active, and the physical qualities most capable of endurance. The fact should not be lost sight of that health and strength—a sound body housing a sound mind—are wonderful factors in literary success.

There are some writers so constituted that they can rise superior to circumstances and work whenever and wherever the opportunity offers. Others claim that their best work is done at night, after the activities of the day are finished. But probably any one who will give the matter an unprejudiced trial will admit that no other hours or methods are so favorable as to employ habitually the morning for literary composition.

“Nail yourself to a chair and bend to work! Go to work, my brother; go to work! Stick to your work and you will succeed!” These were the words of Joel Chandler Harris to a young man with literary ambitions. The young man said that he would put this advice into practice, so he went away at once and purchased a handsomely carved desk, a revolving chair and a ream of paper; then he “nailed himself to the chair and bent to the work,” for two weeks. At the end of that time he said: “Well, I’ve been there two

weeks, but the work won't come; it's no go, I tell you. Do you know anybody who wants to buy a roller top desk and a revolving chair?"

That is the method of some would-be young writers. They make elaborate preparations for the work which it is not in them to do. Two weeks of effort toward the accomplishment of a life task!

Mr. Kipling wrote: "No man's advice is the least benefit in our business, and I am a very busy man. Keep on trying until you either fail or succeed."

The eminent scholar and church historian, Dr. Philip Schaff, used to say of himself: "I have not genius; I am simply a hard worker, and what I am I owe to God and to constant application, keeping my wits about me."

Samuel Smiles said: "Genius without work is certainly a dumb orator; and it is unquestionably true that the men of the highest genius have invariably been found to be amongst the most plodding, hard-working and intent men—their chief characteristic apparently consisting simply in their power of laboring more intensely and effectively than others."

William Dean Howells said recently that hard work in literature made what the world calls genius—with a brain, of course, to begin with.

The method of giving utterance to our thought is always a matter for serious consideration, a matter of great importance, but not of the *first* importance. If this were true, it would resolve itself into an admission that manner is more than matter. But before the necessity for elegance and clearness of expression, there must be substance. There must be a thought to express before thought can properly be applied to the manner of expression. So, in counseling a beginner in literature, the one who would lay first and greatest stress upon the *manner* of expression would put him upon the wrong road. Attend first and chiefly to the *matter*. Be very certain that you have something to write, something that is worthy of all the thought and care that you can give it in your effort to provide the proper form of expression. Dress has its proper place in the adornment of literature, as in the adornment of the individual. But to make dress a matter of more importance than the mind and soul of the wearer is to put the infinitely lesser before the infinitely greater.

To a large extent the style is the man. Individuality there must be in any one who has anything to say that is worthy of being said. So, having the thought, the brain and the mental powers which must exist for original work of any force; there will also be a certain individuality of style in which to clothe the thought. Or if there is not this style, or if at the first it be rugged and unformed, practice in the art of expressing the thought will in time bring about the form of expression that is suited best to all the matter which you have to communicate.

Literature is hardly a thing to be studied by itself. The young writer may not go far wrong if he begins to study for his life work by studying life itself. All true literature must be founded upon the life that exists or has existed. Gain first a knowledge of this in one or many of its varied phases, and you have somewhat upon which to build. To take a modern instance, Mr. Kipling's wonderful success has been based upon his knowledge of life and men. This is the very foundation rock of his great reputation. He never errs in truly depicting the people whom he attempts to portray. Having the ability to do this, the style really matters little. In Mr. Kipling's case it has often been rough and unformed. Yet with him, as with Carlyle, the rough, inherent style of the man was just that best adapted to the matter which he had to set forth.

And a writer's style will grow with his growth. What matter whether it is this or that at the beginning, if only it will form in the crucible of time and use, even as the rough diamond forms under the skillful touch of the lapidary. It is not expected that a writer will stand still at the point at which he has begun. If this were so there would be little hope in our literature. What he can do at the beginning is of little moment; only so it shows that he has that in him which may serve as a foundation upon which to work, and which gives promise of being worthy the effort required to bring it to a worthy development.

The writer for current publications must be constantly a student of style in a certain somewhat narrow and limited sense. The style which he must particularly display, in order to obtain ready acceptance for his work, is that style which is the vogue of the day and of the publications to which he would contribute. This may be considered as putting a low estimate and improper construction upon the quality of style, as that is meant in reference to literature



in its largest aspects. But we are considering literature now somewhat in its commercial aspect, and are treating of the things which the writer must do in order to pave the way for success in an especial line. He must observe continually the character of the work used, and regard that as a criterion of the character of the work desired.

“Fine writing” is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of acquiring style. The day of fine writing for itself has passed. Neither editors nor publishers longer look favorably upon the writer who ornately builds up phrase upon phrase and paragraph upon paragraph without arriving rapidly toward a definite end. It is upon the work of such writers that the editorial blue pencil is used without mercy.

It is not always nor even often pleasant to have one's manuscript returned as unacceptable, but occasionally such returns are of the very greatest value to the writer, especially if he can look between the lines of the editor's polite and non-committal refusal and discover there that the reason for the return has been an excess of this fine writing, upon which he lavished such great pains. The story which contains one good scene, two or three characters acting in a circumscribed environment, and a dramatic climax, has, perhaps, been spread through 6,000 or 8,000 words. If, when the story has been returned a dozen times and the fact has begun to dawn upon the writer that there must be something radically wrong with it, he would himself edit the manuscript carefully, mercilessly cutting out the flights of fancy, the super-graceful touches, the fine phrasing that seems to him so very fine, and in reducing it one-half leave the story itself untouched—but told now with infinitely more vigor and action—he would doubtless find it more acceptable to editors and the reading public and more profitable to himself than it ever could have been when told at its previous and needless entire length.

The employment of useless adjectives and of synonymous words in description are two cardinal sins of young writers, and ones that most frequently call for the use of the blue pencil. The introduction of matter that is not relevant, and with many the tendency to “preach,” are other common faults which often mar the otherwise good work of young writers.

In editing or revising one's own work, it should always be kept in mind that a word which is not necessary, which will not help



forward the story, or which will not throw added light upon the scene, should be ruthlessly given over to the blue pencil. Take that story which you have just completed and polish it by this rule, and after you have done this be honest with yourself, and see if it is not better than it was before.

## CHAPTER III

Editors the Friends of Writers—Their Consideration for New Aspirants—  
Help Editors by Doing Your Work Properly—How to Prepare and Send  
Your MS.—Don't Send Needless Letters—Type Copy is Preferred—The  
*Nom de plume*—Don't Presume on Editors.

**W**E have known certain writers who were quite confident that all editors were in league against them and bound to prevent them having any opportunity to prove their quality to the public.

This question might be argued at considerable length, but it is not worth while. Editors are in need of writers just as much as writers are in need of editors. The relations between them should be, and usually are, most friendly. Perhaps if either could do without the other, it would be the writers rather than the editors. The writer can go to sawing wood for a living (or if of the gentler sex, to baking bread, or sewing buttons on shirts), and so manage to keep soul and body together without the editor's assistance. But without the writer's aid the editor cannot fill the pages of his newspaper or the columns of his magazine, and as the majority of people are prejudiced against reading old things over and over, he would soon have to give up the fight.

The very worst thing that can happen to a young writer is to gain the impression that editors do not want him to succeed. The truth of this is directly to the contrary. If he has a spark of genius or talent they are glad to assist him in any manner that they may be able to toward its development. They know very well that life is short and that the public is fickle. The favorite writer of to-day may be in his grave to-morrow, or if still out of it, the public may conclude that it has had enough of him and cry for some one new. And if one editor cannot supply this demand, another may, and the one who fails must go to the wall. The writer of this can himself testify to many words of encouragement and kindly acts of assistance given him by editors of various publications, when he first began to send out his manuscripts for acceptance. A word of criticism here, of suggestion there, enabled him at times to better his work, to send it into the right channels, or to turn his attention

to certain things that editors wanted done and that he was able to do for them.

The ignorant, incompetent and careless cannot expect great consideration, for it is apparent at a glance that they will never accomplish anything, and editors would not be justified in encouraging such to continue along a path where they were certain to meet with failure.

Having made up your mind that the editor is well disposed toward you, it then becomes your duty to do all that you can to make his work easy, and to further him in his laudable intentions toward you. That you may help toward such an end, this chapter will be a miscellany of hints of what writers should and should not do in their intercourse with editors.

Never roll your manuscript. Send it flat, if a bulky manuscript; or folded, if a small one. Rolled manuscripts are a nuisance in any office, and many editors feel justified in throwing such into the waste-paper basket without opening them. If an editor tries to read a rolled manuscript, the sheets curl up and run all over his desk, and sometimes all over the office. If it has to be returned to the author, it requires five or ten minutes to get it into compact shape and securely wrapped and pasted. All editors, since the beginning of time, have warned contributors against the practice of rolling manuscripts, yet there are some who still persist in doing this. Such deserve absolutely no consideration from editors.

In sending any manuscript that is to be returned by mail, enclose with it an envelope of proper size and shape, addressed and fully stamped. Until writers throughout the world unite upon the use of paper cut to a certain size, and agree to fold their manuscripts in a certain manner, editors can hardly be expected to keep on hand a sufficient variety of envelopes to meet all requirements. So, unless you send the proper envelope, do not growl if your manuscript is refolded and creased and soiled, in a laudable endeavor to put it up securely for the return trip in such wrapper as may be at hand.

Take at least ordinary precaution to guard against the loss of your manuscript. Write your name and address plainly upon the envelope, with a return request to the postmaster. Newspapers, magazines and publishing firms may fail, or they may change their address. The above precaution will insure the return of your manu-



script and save you loss of time, worry, correspondence, and often the loss of the manuscript itself.

Write your name and address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your manuscript. Then an editor is not put to the trouble of keeping your letter and your manuscript together, but has before him, in compact form, all the information that he needs.

Never send your manuscript under one enclosure and letter of notification under another. If you do, the editor is put to the annoyance and trouble of having to match up the two, and possibly of keeping one upon his desk until a delayed mail brings in the other.

It is a good plan to indicate upon the first page the number of words contained in your manuscript. It is not necessary to make an exact count of all your words, but count the words in several lines and then multiply their average by the total number of lines. This will assist an editor to determine just how much space in his publication your story or article will require if accepted; and length—adaptability to the requirements of a certain space—is often an important factor toward acceptance.

Don't send your manuscript to-day, and write an impatient note day after to-morrow to know if it will be accepted. Give the editor time. He may have an hundred manuscripts upon his desk when yours arrives, and these are entitled to prior consideration. In the largest and best-regulated editorial offices, a manuscript requires about three or four weeks to run the gauntlet of proper consideration. If you do not hear from your work within a month, send a polite note of inquiry. But impatience in this respect never pays. Editors have sent home many a story that might have been accepted, rather than go to the trouble of stating that it was still under consideration, and the reasons which might lead to its final acceptance or rejection. And many a story has been recalled by the too impatient author just as the editor has come to a favorable decision regarding it.

Never ask an editor to examine a manuscript upon which you have not exhausted the final effort. Do not expect him to waste his time reading a manuscript that you know is not as good as you can make it. Bear in mind that he has plenty of others upon his desk, the product of past masters in the art of literature, who have left nothing undone that their knowledge of the craft can suggest to make the work perfect. It is easier to see faults in the work



of others than in our own. So if a mote is perceptible to yourself, do not doubt that the editor will find a beam. If you can see a slight blemish, he will discover a larger one. So consider that the time you put upon revision, copying, correcting and perfecting your work, is better spent than any other.

Offer nothing but type copy for editorial inspection. Type copy is more easily read than even the best pen-script. It presents the thought in clearer form, so that it may be grasped at a glance. An editor does not expect to read a manuscript from the first word to the last in order to determine if it be acceptable. It is his custom to glance at the beginning, then at the end, and then take a dip into the middle. If these tastes whet his appetite for more, he or an assistant will later read it carefully, and at leisure. From the type copy these samples may be quickly taken, and the editor may tell without any waste of time whether the work is good enough to warrant further consideration. So accustomed are all editors nowadays to type copy, that pen-script stands but a poor chance of acceptance in competition with it.

For ordinary manuscripts to be sent by mail the best size of paper to use is a sheet 8 1-2 by 11 inches. This should be a clear white, firm in texture, and not too heavy. A linen paper is to be preferred. Heavy paper makes a needlessly heavy postage account. Paper that is very light and thin is difficult to handle and does not stand the wear and tear of many journeys.

Upon a sheet of the size named a margin of one inch should be reserved on the left side, and an equal space at the top and bottom. This is for the use of the editor in case he finds it necessary to "edit" the manuscript before sending it to the printer. A typewritten manuscript should be double-spaced. Such an one is much easier to read and to edit than single-spaced copy.

Underscore all foreign words. But prior to this may properly come the suggestion to use as few foreign words as possible. The editor of one of the leading newspapers of the country once wrote to a contributor that he would accept nothing in which foreign phrases or words were introduced, if there was an English equivalent by which the meaning could be made plain. Never introduce such words and phrases for effect nor to show your learning.

Writers have been known to send a note as follows with a manuscript submitted for acceptance:

"DEAR SIR:

"If you cannot use the enclosed manuscript, please throw it into the waste basket."

Now, this is not only bad taste, but bad policy. If you do not value your own work sufficiently to desire it returned, in case it should not meet the needs of a certain publication, and if you do not estimate its money value as being as great as that of the postage stamps that would be required for its return, do not think an editor will care sufficiently to print it—much less pay for it. Manuscripts submitted in such manner will never see the light of publication through the columns of any reputable journal. In such cases editors will be apt to consider your work at your own valuation, and do with it as you have suggested.

A *nom-de-plume* is an affectation and is not calculated to impress an editor favorably. There is no more reason why a writer should sign a fictitious name to his work, than for a painter to do so with his canvases or for John Smith to put the name of Roderick Random over the store where he sells pork and molasses. And why should a fictitious name be used? If your work is good, you certainly desire for it all the credit you can possibly gain; and if it is bad, stand up manfully and take the blame, and resolve that you will do better and merit less criticism in the future. Don't try to get behind a cloak.

There was a time when the *nom-de-plume* was in favor, but nowadays it has rather come to be regarded as the sign-manual of the amateur, and of a very amateurish amateur at that. One of the principal objections that an editor has to it is that it gives him two names to keep track of: one to use in his correspondence and accounts, the other in his proof sheets. And as we have elsewhere remarked, editors are not searching for contributors who make them needless trouble.

Young writers are of course always anxious to see their work in print, and sometimes trouble editors unreasonably after they have received a notification of acceptance, by asking for information as to the exact date of publication. Nine times out of ten an editor cannot tell, until just about the time for the magazine to go to press, exactly what will go in and what will be left out. Many things are to be considered in making up each number. Among them, seasonableness, variety—story, descriptive article, essay, poem, etc.—and perhaps more than all else, length. Sometimes an article or

story may be in type and the proofs read with the intention of using a certain number, yet because just the right space is not to be had it may be crowded out month after month.

Leave as little "editing" for the editor as you can. Study closely the pages of well-edited magazines. Observe their methods of punctuation, learn the art of correct paragraphing, understand the correct use of quotation marks, and make use of the knowledge thus acquired. If you do not attend to these matters the editor must—if he accepts your manuscript—before it can go to the composing room. Do not leave this work for the editor because you think he knows best how it should be done. Editors are busy men, and we have known manuscripts that were otherwise acceptable to be returned solely on this account. The editor will not do the work that the writer should do—especially if he has ready to his hand another manuscript that is properly finished.

Never presume upon the kindness and courtesy of editors. Never weary them by excessive correspondence. Do not intrude your family affairs upon them, nor beg them to accept an article because you need the money. A newspaper or a magazine is not an eleemosynary institution. Its editor is looking for the very best things that he can get, and it is his duty to consider nothing except the interest of his magazine and its readers.

Do not send to an editor a number of manuscripts at one time. This is apt to give the impression that you have a lot of unsalable stock and that you are endeavoring to unload on him. Even if you are satisfied there may be something good among them, you have no right to throw upon a busy man the burden of reading a lot of material that he cannot possibly want, upon the chance of finding one thing that will meet his needs. He will feel that you should have separated the wheat from the chaff yourself. The majority of editors are so constituted that when they feel themselves imposed upon in this way they will bundle up the entire consignment and send it back without even attempting to discover if there be one good thing among it all.

Whatever happens, keep on good terms with the editors. Even if your manuscript is sent back all "tattered and torn" after it has been held six months "for examination," take the matter philosophically. Reason to yourself that the editor wanted to use it, but found that he really could not and that some careless office boy, and not himself, is responsible for its dilapidated appearance.



Do not, on any account, expect especial consideration. If you are a woman, do not presume upon your sex. If you are young, strive with all your might and main not to let the editor guess it. If you are ill, go to the doctor, but don't write the editor that your manuscript is not just as good as you would have made it if you had been well. Remember that the personality of the writer is a matter of absolutely no importance to the majority of editors. What is wanted is printable, available copy that does not require too much editing—news, fresh articles, good stories.

We have known kindly editors to return stories with the suggestion that they should be cut. When the writer receives such a suggestion from one who has practical knowledge regarding the points which help to make or mar the story, he will be wise to observe it, and such observation will be to his own profit. Editors will not do this cutting down, no matter how good the story may be. If the writer does not learn to prepare his material properly there will be slight chance for its acceptance. Experienced writers have learned to do away with the redundant and the superfluous: to use but one word, where one will serve, rather than three; to use no superlatives, no unnecessary description, no useless talk *about* characters, but to have them speak for themselves. There is no more serious error in story-writing than to talk about one's characters, instead of having them tell and act their own story upon the page and before the reader's eye. Excess of narrative and description will kill any story.

Among the many helpful criticisms which kindly editors have thrown out for the help of young writers we have come across the following: One wrote to a contributor who had submitted a short story for the children's page of a weekly paper—"This story, though written about a boy, is not written for a boy." What could have been more suggestive than this, showing to the writer at once that the manner was not in keeping with the matter?

In regard to a story in which the author had at the beginning wandered rather aimlessly, and had gone too far about in the effort to arrive at the "story," the editor wrote: "It is interesting, but I kept waiting to find out what it was all for. Did he do enough to pay for coming so far?"

Another wrote that a description of a certain industry was too much diluted by the dialogue. It was spoiled by having too much matter not pertinent to the subject.



## CHAPTER IV

Tools of the Craft—Studying the Dictionary—List of Valuable Text-books—Keeping Clippings for Reference—Scrap-books—Note-books—Files of Journals—The Subject Book.

**T**EXT-BOOKS are the writers' tools. One cannot be too well equipped with the implements of his craft.

The general contributor to the press, the man who makes writing the business of his life, and follows all its leadings with the same assiduity with which the business man follows the leadings of trade and commercial life, must not overlook such aids.

Let us begin at the beginning. A dictionary is all-important. No matter how much you may pride yourself upon your ability to spell correctly, you will come upon words that will make you hesitate. Have at your hand a dictionary that is an authority—Webster's International or the Standard is probably the best for American writers—and consult it when even the shadow of a suspicion that you may not be absolutely right crosses your mind.

There is an ancient joke about an old lady who replied to the question: "Have you ever read the dictionary?" with, "Yes, but I did not find much connection in the story."

There is not very much connection in the story, to be sure; yet one who will read the dictionary in the right way will find it a treasury of storied wealth. One of the most thoroughly educated men whom it was ever the writer's privilege to know would never read without an open dictionary at his hand. Whether the reading was for a few unoccupied moments or the serious work of the day, the dictionary was ready for constant consultation. He was a man whose name was not widely known to the public, yet at his death the *New York Tribune* said: "One of our most learned men has gone." Without doubt his great learning was in part due to this steadfast habit of using the dictionary as his constant companion.

There are men who find profit by making the dictionary their companion of every spare moment. One may not care to read it through from the first page to the last, but by turning its leaves one will constantly come upon items of information that are worth adding to the sum total of one's knowledge. Not merely is the dictionary of worth to aid in finding the definition of words or to verify doubtful spelling, but often the writer finds it helps him to the choice of words, to select the one which has just the right shade

of meaning, or the synonym which is wanted to enable him to avoid repetition. Familiarity with the dictionary helps one vastly to find just what is wanted, without wasting time in the search.

The enlargement of his vocabulary is a thing toward which the writer should always work. He should not search for uncommon and obscure words, but should endeavor to have at his command always the largest assortment of plain, simple Saxon words, which will enable him to convey the strongest impressions in the briefest and simplest manner. All the words that one can need or use are within the covers of this one book of which we are speaking, and it is not beyond the power of any moderately endowed person to secure an intimate working knowledge of the majority of them.

Should you not possess a practical and thorough knowledge of grammatical rules, acquire it. An understanding of any English grammar from cover to cover is a beginning. Supplement this with such a work as Reed & Kellogg's "Language Lessons"; follow this with Rhetoric—any late author. For a knowledge of choice of words have Ayer's "Verbalist" at hand. For synonyms there is nothing to compare with Roget's "Thesaurus."

Use your dictionary not only for orthography but for definitions. Know the precise meaning of every word that you use. Have a standard work on Prosody, and upon Style. Buy as many volumes of the subjoined list as your purse will permit; and you may be reasonably certain that the more of them you possess, the weightier will your purse be in the end.

1001 Places to Sell MSS .....	\$1.00
Manuscript Record .....	.60
How to Write a Short Story (Quirk).....	.50
Crabb's English Synonyms.....	1.25
Everybody's Writing Desk Book.....	1.00
Soule's English Synonyms.....	2.25
Elements of Composition and Rhetoric (Waddy).....	1.15
The Rhymester; or, The Rules of Rhyme.....	1.00
Walker's Rhyming Dictionary.....	1.50
Outlines of Rhetoric (Genung).....	1.15
How to Write Clearly (Abbott).....	.60
A Practical Course in English Composition (Newcomer).....	.90
A Treatise on English Punctuation (Wilson).....	1.15
Punctuation and Other Typographical Matters (Bigelow).....	.50
Errors in the Use of English (Hodson).....	1.50
Words and Their Uses (White).....	2.00
Familiar Quotations (Bartlett).....	3.00
Roget's Thesaurus.....	2.00

The "Encyclopædia Britannica" and Appleton's "American Encyclopedia" are invaluable reference books for the hack-writer or miscellaneous contributor. By the aid of one or both of these, one may, at odd times, "work up" articles which, though perhaps nothing more than "pot-boilers," are not to be despised for the addition they make to the annual income. Historical and biographical articles, antiquarian articles and travel articles are not infrequently worked up by experts in this manner, with no other aids than the above, and without stirring beyond the walls of their study. Other valuable reference books for work of this sort are Brand's "Popular Antiquities"; Hone's "Every-Day Book," and Chambers' "Book of Holidays." The latter will be found especially useful in preparing articles which have to do with our various holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, etc.

Clippings and a systematic method of keeping same where they can be easily consulted when wanted, should be part of the furnishing of every literary worker's study, and rank with note-books in importance.

It will be found impossible, however, to keep all clippings that one may possibly desire for future use. Sometimes the matter of which the writer desires to keep track cannot be clipped, as it is a portion of the contents of some book or set of magazines, which may not be marred; or the clipping may involve so much material that it would only cumber a file.

To avoid such difficulties it is advisable to have a handy method of filing references. Then when reading, wherever one comes upon any item of information that may be of value in future work, a note may be made of the book or magazine in which it is to be found. If a book, put down the title, author and name of publisher, in case you should at any time find it advisable to possess a copy. Then make memorandum of the page upon which the paragraph of especial interest is to be found, and write down with it as a cue the words with which it begins. Collate all this information in a small blank book, which should be fully indexed, so that you may turn at once to references upon any subject.

The scrap-book also fills an important place. But a scrap-book may be of utility, or it may be a nuisance of the first rank. A miscellaneous lot of clippings thrown into a scrap-book in no order at all are of very little service when they happen to be needed. And a well-ordered collection of clippings is indeed a rarity.



Perhaps the best scrap-books are not scrap-books at all, but filing cases, where everything under one head or treating upon one subject may be kept together and overhauled at will. These filing cases may be very simple and inexpensive. A series of stout envelopes of uniform size will do as well as anything. These should be arranged in alphabetical order (with some brief of their contents on the outside), and put into a case in which they will fit nicely and methodically. By this system the matter is always indexed, and everything upon one subject is in one place.

Quite as important as the information that a clipping may contain is sometimes the knowledge of where the clipping came from. A slip of paper attached to each clipping should record this information.

Every person who as a vocation, or only as an avocation, writes for publication, should have a note-book constantly at hand. New ideas come to us at all sorts of odd times, and many of them are lost because there is no definite place ready at the moment in which to jot them down. The memory is a treacherous thing in such cases and not to be depended upon.

The value of this ever-ready note-book may be shown by a single illustration. We all know how fleeting is the memory of a dream. The most startling vision of the night, one that wakes us trembling with affright, and that seems so indelibly stamped upon the palimpsest of the brain that it will never pass into nothingness, has often by morning vanished utterly.

A writer whom we know was awakened in the night by a terrible fantasy that had taken possession of his brain. So gruesome and yet so real was it that its literary value appealed to him at once. But knowing the transitory nature of these impressions he was afraid to sleep without at least recording the outline, from which the whole scene might be articulated at his leisure. So a light was struck, and with pencil and pad in hand, the notes were jotted down. In the morning it was but a slight task to construct a story—which sold at the first intention. Without the notes jotted down at the moment when the vision was most real it is doubtful if the story could have been written. The motto, "Secure the shadow ere the substance fades," should be ever present in the mind of the writer.

"My friend," said the great Russian writer, Gogol, "if you wish to do me the greatest favor that I can expect from a Christian, make a note of every small daily act and fact that you may come across



anywhere. What trouble would it be to you to write down every night in a sort of diary such notes as these: To-day I heard such an opinion expressed; I spoke with such a person, of such a disposition, such a character, of good education or not; he holds his hands thus or takes his snuff so—in fact, everything that you see and notice from the greatest to the least.” It was this habit that resulted in it being said of him that no other author had so much the gift of showing the reality of the trivialities of life, of describing the petty ways of an insignificant creature, of bringing out and revealing to his readers infinitesimal details which would otherwise pass unnoticed.

An author's note-books, properly kept, may be a mine of information, of inspiration and of compensation. Almost chief among the note-books, in practical value, will be that in which is collected and collated properly information regarding the methods and needs of various publications. There is one standard handbook which furnishes such information in a compact form, the manual entitled “1001 Places to Sell Mss.” But changes among publications are constant, failures are occurring almost daily, and new publications start up like weeds in a garden. To keep track of all these changes is part of a writer's business. Unless he does it he cannot use his material to the best advantage. He will find himself sending articles to publications that have gone out of existence; while other journals will be starting up and drawing about them a staff of writers, and he will awake too late to the fact that he has missed a profitable market; still, other journals are changing their style and methods, so that material which would have been acceptable to them yesterday will not be to-morrow. In *THE EDITOR*, 150 Nassau Street, New York, is a monthly report of the literary market, which is studied by thousands of authors.

These rejection-slips and notes of refusal received by writers are not, as a rule, pleasant or valued communications. Yet where these slips contain a hint of the needs of the publication, or where some kindly editor has penciled a hasty bit of information, they should be kept as a matter for future reference and instruction.

So far as can be done, writers should see the various literary journals at no great intervals of time. If one can, at least semi-annually, collect sample copies of them, and file them in such a manner that they can be referred to easily, they will prove of great assistance. In looking them over one will run across certain sug-

gestions as to their needs which are not told in plain words. In the multiplicity of journals, a mental note of such things is apt soon to escape one. It is far better to jot down briefly such matters, and place them where the notes can be consulted. An indexed note-book we consider best for such a purpose. Then upon one page or under one heading may be gathered all the information concerning any particular journal.

If one prefers a home-made method for filing information, rather than to use the note-book, the following suggestions from a writer may be of benefit:

"Take a number of sheets of foolscap and fold them twice from the bottom up. Then write the name and publisher's address of each of the periodicals at the top of the folded sheet, using one sheet for each periodical. In this manner you can file them away together, and in a moment find the one you wish to consult. On the inside write in condensed form all the scraps of information you run across."

Such a record may contain information along the following lines: Periodicity of publication (weekly, monthly, etc.); different lines of work used (fiction, articles, poems, etc.); character of articles and whether illustrated or not; the character of the fiction (whether somewhat sensational, love stories, adventure, etc.); length of stories and articles; prices paid (which knowledge must be experimental); whether the publication pays on acceptance or on publication; how long it requires to pass upon manuscripts; whether it pays for verse, etc., etc.

A writer who has never made use of such a record kept up systematically for a year can have little idea of the amount of practical information that will thus be gathered, and of the many times he will refer to it when preparing or sending off contributions.

The writer who intends to make a definite occupation of literature in general should prepare to-day for work that he may wish to do ten years from now. In other words, he must be accumulating material, adding to his stock in trade, or some day he will find that he has suddenly run out of the elementary substance from which to build.

A man who sets himself down at his desk in the morning to write a story or article, with no well-considered plan regarding it, with no *motif* or incident or experience or bit of knowledge that he has churned over and over in his mind against its possible use

at this time, will have a very poor chance of doing anything worth while.

On the other hand, if he can refer to a subject book, in which he has put down from time to time subjects which it has then seemed to him might some day serve his needs, and if he has from time to time referred to these, thought them over, and formulated some method for their use, it will not be a difficult thing now to select one of them and soon be in full swing of composition along a well-considered path.

X A subject-book may be divided into different sections and each of these devoted to an entirely different line of topics. One may be for fiction, in which titles or *motifs* alone are to be set down, leaving suggestions for the work which will go into the story, to be entered at the proper place in other note-books. Other sections may be devoted to headings for essays, geographical and historical sketches, feature articles, poems, practical articles, etc.

When preparing for work it may depend largely upon the mood as to the line of subjects that will most commend itself to one. Having thus determined whether one will devote this particular morning to writing a story or to working upon some practical or historical article, it will be comparatively easy to select the topic that will just fit in with the present mood of work.

The choice having been made, other note-books and clipping files will be brought into play, and work which otherwise would be a thankless task goes on merrily and swimmingly.

In a subject-book it is quite probable that many topics will be put down which will never be used. There will be a constant process of selection on the part of the writer, and after a time the pages will show the survival of the unfittest. Yet a writer who has for years made use of such a subject-book states that it is a constant surprise to him to find what a very large percentage of the subjects set down therein have eventually proved available. He also states that the fact was self-evident that almost all of those set down upon the earlier pages of the book had been worked, while comparatively few of the later subjects had as yet proven of practical utility. This undoubtedly signified that those themes which have been in the mind for a considerable time and which have constantly recurred as the pages of the book were turned over each day in the search for a topic, are the ones upon which one can most readily work. Thus it is clearly shown that those who produce miscellane-



ous contributions for current publication should not depend wholly upon the subjects that may come to mind only as one goes to his desk, but that all should endeavor to prepare ahead for the task which is inevitably to be done. It has been very well said that in this manner we get the advantage of "unconscious cerebration" as well as that of deliberate attention in our reading and thought to such topics as we have thus set apart for future labor.

The subject-book may be abused as well as used. Nothing should be set down therein which does not contain possibilities. Consider well before you devote a line to a topic which may only prove a burden and an annoyance. X

In using it for the purpose of selecting a subject it will be the height of folly to endeavor to take up the subjects in the order in which they have been set down, as if you are bound to begin at the top of the first page and write straight down the register. But leaf back and forth and consider the material as it comes again and again before the eye, from the point of view of present availability, timeliness, knowledge of the theme, present vividness and adaptability to the mood of the hour. In this way it may be found that a subject which was last week obscure and unattractive to a degree, is now clear and attractive and full of suggestion. X

The very fact of having a subject noted down for possible use will direct one's attention toward it, and information which may be in line with the topic will apparently gravitate toward one unsought.



## CHAPTER V

A Stepping Stone—The Training Valuable for Future Literary Work—Newspaper English—The Newspaper a Daily Magazine—Division of Labor—Necessary Qualities for a Reporter—How to Write a News Story—Valuable Knowledge and Acquaintance—Famous Correspondents—Compensation—The Reporter's Field—Examples of Reportorial Work.

**T**HE work of the newspaper reporter is not often considered among the higher or more enticing branches of literary endeavor. Most of the reporter's work is performed hastily, his copy is prepared while the presses are waiting, and there is little time to infuse any literary spirit into his work even though he has the ability.

His contributions form an important part of the make-up of the daily issues of the great organs of news and public opinion, yet that which he contributes is rarely signed, and so he has no opportunity to make his personality known to the reading public. Yet, notwithstanding these difficulties and drawbacks, there are a few men who have made the obscure post of the reporter a stepping-stone to the higher walks of literary life.

In some ways the training that the reporter receives in the ceaseless and often unpleasant grind of newspaper work, is of the highest value. It teaches him to think and act quickly and to seize unerringly the salient points of a story. He will turn toward dramatic forms of expression naturally, realizing that in the brief space allotted to him in the columns of his journal, that which he has to say needs to be said effectively. Condensation, the doing away with redundant verbiage, the uselessness of fine writing, are all borne in upon him daily by the editorial blue pencil which ruthlessly cuts down his half column to a compact stick-full.

A reporter upon a great newspaper comes into close contact with many phases and conditions of life. Tragedy in its deepest hues is constantly before him. The under side of the world becomes to him an open book. The machinations of political life are laid bare before him. All these are material for the story-writer and the novelist of the future. It probably would be impossible for anyone to write stories dealing with "practical politics," unless he had been through the school of the reporter.

It is objected that the newspaper does not form a good training-school for the serious literary worker, as its methods demand the subversion of style to the practical every-day needs of journalism. "Newspaper English" has become a by-word, yet some of the most carefully edited of our metropolitan journals contain no word or phrase or sentence that can be cavilled at by the most discriminating critic. Such a journal was the New York *Sun*, under the careful editorial management of Mr. Richard H. Dana, a worthy successor to his father. Such was the new York *Evening Post* under William Cullen Bryant, and such has always been the New York *Tribune*; and other journals throughout our country are almost equally deserving of honorable mention in this respect. Perhaps certain careful writers and critics would have an intellectual awakening could they see the stringent rules in some newspaper offices for the guidance of their writers. Slang and colloquialisms are prohibited, and lists are made of words that must not be used. Other lists show forms of spelling that must be adhered to. Others show words that must be avoided in describing certain things, for the simple reason that they have been overworked in newspaper use.

When we consider that a single issue of some of our larger newspapers contains as much reading matter as one of the standard magazines, and that this is all written, put into type, proof read, printed and put into circulation within twenty-four hours, it seems little short of the marvelous that there is so little to cavil at. We fancy that if some of our magazine editors who decry this same "Newspaper English" were for once compelled to get up an issue of their magazine in so short a time, the editing would be very much less careful and correct than it is on the average newspaper.

The daily newspaper is a great news machine, of which the reporter is but one of the component parts—a cog of the great system of wheels by which it moves. Yet without this important cog this daily record of current events could not exist. The public at large is apt to consider the reporter chiefly as an interviewer who goes about with unlimited cheek prying into the concerns of other people. We regret that there is some foundation to warrant this assumption, for certain journals of the sensational order make a special feature of such work. Yet one who forms his opinion of a reporter and his work upon such scant premises will go very far wrong.

A large metropolitan daily must, of course, have a very large

staff of reporters, in order to cover rapidly the whole field of possible incidents and happenings, and secure every item of news so that no rival journal may in the morning congratulate itself upon a "scoop." In such offices the work is systematized, each reporter having his especial assignment: one will be detailed for society, another for railroad, one each for sporting, police, fires, courts, etc. There may be, even upon the most conservative journal, one whose special faculty is interviewing, and whose regular detail is for such work. But while each may thus have his special assignment, he must be ready to execute any branch of reportorial work, and be ready for any emergency of the hour, before he can be considered thorough in his trade.

Essential qualities for a reporter are tact and foresight. The latter is an attribute difficult to develop; the best reporters are those with whom it is inherent. Reporters have been known who have had news items evolve before their very eyes, yet who did not recognize them as such. A man of this class will not advance very rapidly nor very far in his profession.

Upon securing a position where you have an opportunity to show, if you have in you, the stuff of which reporters are made, the first thing will be to receive from the city editor an assignment. He may order you to visit the hotels and examine the registers for important arrivals. Or at the moment there may be an alarm of fire and he will send you off to try your qualities in that line. Or he may send you into the slums to investigate the circumstances of last night's murder, or into the more aristocratic quarters of the city to pick up the crumbs of the latest salacious scandal. Whatever your assignment is, cover the ground as rapidly as possible, and keep in mind that as soon as you arrive at the office your duty is to produce your "copy" with the least possible delay. Speed is the ever-present watchword for the workers upon a daily newspaper.

Upon arrival at the office your material will probably be in the form of brief, rough notes; the reporter who understands his work does not try to write out his article while he is upon the scene. The notes, however, should be in consecutive and orderly arrangement, so that when the start at the "write-up" is made, the material will fall naturally into the three parts—the introduction, the story itself and the details. The introduction should contain the gist of the event or incident, and it should be sufficiently plain and comprehensive to furnish a busy or hasty reader a fair knowledge of



the happening. Even though the editorial blue pencil has condensed the news of the day to apparently the smallest possible compass, there are yet busy men who do little more than read the headlines and skim over the introduction to each article.

After the introduction comes the telling of the principal incidents. Then follow the details, which may be particularized to such length as is warranted by the importance of the subject matter itself. These details are for people who have plenty of time to read and who are not satisfied until they know all that can be told of the latest murder, elopement, marriage in high life, railway accident, hotel holocaust, death of a public man, meeting between two great politicians, bank robbery, or whatever may be the particular news the reporter has covered.

A new man upon a paper is handicapped if he is a stranger in the city. In such a case the first thing for him to do is to make a study of the especial localities in which he may be expected to work. The greater his knowledge of the city and its people, the more likely will he be to come upon important items of news on his own account, and the more able will he be to cover rapidly and fully any assignment that may be given him. He should lose no opportunity to enlarge his circle of acquaintance, especially among prominent people and those who figure in public affairs. Some of our most successful reporters have been those who were enabled to win the confidence and friendship of men high in party or national councils. Often such friendship has been the means of enabling them to secure exact information regarding most important public events far in advance of their contemporaries. It is needless to say that a man who will secure such friendships must himself be worthy of them. He must be, first, absolutely honest and faithful toward his friend; a senator, or a cabinet officer will not be quick to accept a newspaper man upon terms of intimate friendship unless he can rely with absolute certainty upon the judicious quality of such friendship. He must know that the newspaper man will not make use of any information unless it is perfectly understood between them that he is at liberty to do so.

This sometimes places the newspaper worker in a position where he must battle between conscience as represented by fidelity to his profession and to the journal upon which he is employed. But a man who once violates a confidence of this sort is absolutely at the end of his career in this line of work.



Within recent years we have witnessed some of the finer and greater things that a newspaper reporter may accomplish, if he has in him the elements of success. Richard Harding Davis, who began his literary career as a newspaper reporter, has represented some great journals at such events as the coronation of the Czar, at St Petersburg; the jubilee of Queen Victoria, at London, and was a privileged on-looker and participant in the brilliant and dangerous episodes of the Spanish-American war. Julian Ralph, who began his career as a reporter on the *New York Sun*, and has since shown his literary quality in book and magazine work, went through the Chinese-Japanese War as the representative of American journals. A newspaper reporter happened to be at Apia in the interests of the *New York World* when the terrible hurricane of 1891 swept down upon the assembled war vessels of three nations, and by destroying them did much to bring about peace. A newspaper man was on the *City of Paris* a few years ago when she was disabled in mid-ocean, and when the whole world waited for days for tidings of the great ship and its treasure of human lives. This newspaper man sent the first news back to the world by getting ashore in a small boat as the ship neared the Irish coast, making his way to a cable station, and wiring back to New York several columns of description of the accident and of assurances of safety.

The compensation of a metropolitan reporter depends largely upon his ability. If he is paid on space, he may be able to earn anywhere from \$25 to \$75 per week. It will take a pretty bright man, and one who is an industrious and steady worker, to reach the latter figure. In the early days of metropolitan journalism all the members of the staff were salaried men. Now, certain writers receive salaries, while others are paid on space—that is, for the work which they do and which actually finds its way into the paper. Young reporters are usually put upon a salary of \$10 to \$15 a week. The pay of a space-writer depends upon the paper that he serves as well as upon the amount of work that he performs. The prices prevailing in New York are generally the highest in the United States. The leading papers there pay \$8 to \$10 per column for news. It is on record that in a few instances reporters have averaged \$125 a week, which is more than the salary of the average managing editor.

Outside the ministry, there is no profession in which one may get so many glimpses into the workings of the human heart as by

doing staff or assignment work on a great newspaper. The only possible exception to this generalization may be found in the profession of the physician. But the physician does not, in fact, have so varied an experience, although in some lines he may delve more deeply. It is his business to mend the gaps which he finds existing, without exploring causes further than they may affect disease and its cure. But the reporter, while exploring the same regions and investigating the same troubles, makes it his business to learn about the predisposing causes, whether they are medical or not.

The news-gleaner may turn from a scene of domestic trouble to the gaieties of fashionable life, from business meetings of executive bodies, where he has a clear insight into the actions and motives of men who control great affairs, to the police courts, which furnish him with abundant stories of the strange things a depraved mind will accomplish, and with light upon the under-half of the world. He hears not only the opinions of one minister, but the creeds of all religions. He reads the effect of the play on the audience, from ballet-dancers to "The Sign of the Cross." He is not an idle spectator, but he is after facts, and looks below the surface of things, and stores in his mind a wonderful and infinite variety of pictures that are realistic, portraying life as it is, and which may well furnish the basis for the great novel that he intends sometime to write.

The duties of the reporter call for quick and varied perception and ready execution afterward. His writing should be plain, direct and instantly understandable. It may be in a degree picturesque, humorous, and all that, but these traits are not elemental. The reader of a daily journal differs from the reader of the novel or of magazines, in that he does not care at all who writes the record of an event to which he is giving his attention, provided he sees and seizes the meaning of it on all sides. This is the manner in which the writer is bound to present it. What the reader does care for is that an incident, an occurrence, an event, shall be stated in a spirit and style that harmonizes with the matter in hand, and that all attempts at ornamentation or heightening shall be effective by increasing the interest and deepening the impression. No matter how fine the work may be, if it does not help toward this end, the reporter is not accomplishing his especial mission.

To apply for a position on a newspaper without having a very definite idea of the particular work which you want to do, and that you are satisfied you can do, will rarely result profitably. We would

suggest to one about to apply for such a position to prepare a list of several subjects which he considers timely and which he would like to write up. Put the titles of these proposed articles into comprehensive form. Write them out in a way to show just what you propose to work up and present in the finished article. The best way to do this is by means of complete head and sub-heads. This will give the managing editor an insight into your article that mere statement by you could not. Have with you a half dozen such presentations of subjects, and consider yourself fortunate if the manager finds one or two among them that he thinks may fit his needs. If he does this, he will give you an assignment to write upon them, with a promise to accept the article or articles if satisfactory. Now, it depends upon your ability to do the work in a style and manner which will meet the needs of this particular newspaper.

To illustrate the manner in which these memorandums should be prepared for presentation to the editor, we will give some examples taken from a single issue of the *New York Sun*. The first is an interview with the wife of the warden of Sing Sing Prison.

### MRS. SAGE'S PRISON WORK

#### EXPERIENCES THAT FALL TO THE LOT OF FEW WOMEN

Recollections of Two Women Who Were Condemned to Die in Sing Sing Prison—Maria Barberi's Improvement—Mrs. Place's Last Days—Male Convicts Who Retain Love for Their Mothers.

The next is foreign correspondence dated Munich, April 12th. Of course we do not mean to suggest that *The Sun* would present anything as foreign correspondence that did not, in truth, come from over seas, but an article of this sort may be written in New York or Chicago, as well as elsewhere, by any person who possesses the requisite information. The headings show very clearly about what subject matter is to follow.

### MARRIAGES IN GERMANY

#### A BUSINESS SYSTEM THAT WORKS WELL IN PRACTICE

German Husbands Not Ideal from the American Standpoint—A Dowry for the Bride One Prerequisite—Matches Made by Advertising—Restrictions as to Marriage Placed on Army Officers.

A start in newspaper correspondence can often be made by writers living in rural districts, who will send items of news to

their nearest city papers. Items of general interest, such as local happenings and personals concerning persons of prominence, accounts of fires, railroad wrecks, robberies, murders, suicides, failures in business, damage to property by storms, etc., will be gladly received and paid for by metropolitan journals not too far distant, and especially by such as circulate in the territory from which such correspondence comes.

Country papers also like correspondents in suburban villages, and will usually pay enough to warrant one in giving some attention to the work. For these latter journals, items of local interest are desired, and personals about people, of a class which the metropolitan journal would not consider of importance.



## CHAPTER VI

The Short Story—Model Short Stories—The New Writer Welcome—Qualities of the Successful Short Story—Love Stories Always Popular—Action—Length—Sad Stories Not Desired—“True Stories” Not Good Fiction—Rapid or Slow Composition—Fashions in Fiction—Statements of Publishers’ Needs—Timeliness in Fiction.

**I**N the field of the short story exists the widest possible opportunity for writers—both new and old. Short stories are used by the vast majority of publications of all classes. While one may easily reckon up the number of journals that are in the market for serials, for essays and for certain other lines of work, it is almost impossible to estimate those which use the short story, to a greater or lesser extent. Some daily papers make a special feature of a short story in each issue; thus, a single one of them affording a market for three hundred and sixty-five stories in the course of a year. Almost all of the metropolitan newspapers use short stories in their special Sunday editions, but sometimes these are supplied under a syndicate contract. The weekly literary journals, the monthly magazines and the syndicates, are short story buyers. Then all the household journals use them, and class and trade journals afford a limited market. In these latter cases, journals devoted to agriculture, for instance, use stories of farm life. Musical journals use stories having a musical *motif*, etc. Of course, the supply is illimitable, but the demand is so large and so constant that it may fairly be said that any short story, correctly written and having a definite *motif* and development, may find place, if one will be persistent in sending it the rounds.

But there are short stories and short stories. The highest development of them may be seen in such instances as Poe’s “Gold Bug” (the best example of the “treasure story” which our literature affords) and Kipling’s “Brushwood Boy.” In the latter, which is a story of perhaps not more than five thousand words, the complete life story of two characters is told. Not only this, but with vivid characterization, description, splendid style, imagination, the elements of adventure and danger, affection and sentiment, such as are rarely found even within the compass of a two-volume novel. Com-

petent critics have pronounced this one of the best examples of the short story to be found in the English language. The other extreme of the short story may be found in the columns of some of the so-called "family story papers," which pander to the intellectual needs of the half-educated classes.

The writer of the short story naturally hopes to find acceptance with the leading monthly magazines. Publication in these means liberal compensation, and the bringing of one's name and talents before the most liberally educated and most appreciative portions of our reading public. In commenting upon the needs of these journals it will perhaps not be out of place for us to correct at the outset an erroneous impression largely prevalent among young writers. This is to the effect that the editors of the leading magazines are prejudiced against them, and in favor of writers who already have an established reputation.

A little reflection should convince anyone of the folly of this. All of these now famous writers were once new writers, and were as eagerly seeking for recognition as any of the beginners of to-day. It would not be difficult to discover among them many who found recognition in the first instance at the hands of these most exclusive editors. New blood and new material have been, and are, being watched for all the time. A writer who has something new to say, or who can say an old something in a new way, provided both the matter and the manner be good, will have no trouble to obtain a hearing from the best journals.

It is true that we see more work from recognized writers than from amateurs in their pages. That is because the older writers do the best work. They have had training and experience. They *know how*. Once in a generation, perhaps, a new writer leaps fully equipped into the arena. He has material and manner. His style, inherent, is perfect. He does not need the discipline of years, of criticism, of the rejection of his manuscripts. But the majority of writers must serve an apprenticeship before they can hope to become master workmen. Do not become discouraged because of this. It is only what is expected in all other trades and professions, in all the arts and sciences. Why should the writer alone expect to be exempt?

But to go back to the short story. Perhaps you remember the line: "Story! God bless you, I have none to tell." There are too many would-be story-writers that are in the same case. Then, let

us affirm as the first principle, that one must be certain that he has a story to tell, before he can expect to tell his story. Again, be certain the story you have to tell is worth the telling. In it there must be a definite tale, one that possesses some vital element of interest. There must be action, and if there is a plot it should be clear and distinct. The writer should see its end from the very beginning. Otherwise he will be apt to drift on and on in an endless maze of words, in his fruitless endeavor to evolve a climax.

There must be something *in* the story. If in a story of 3,000 words you have one situation that will set the nerves tingling and cause the blood to course more quickly through the veins, one situation that will stir the emotions and cause the reader to take a livelier interest in the joys and sorrows of the creatures of your imagination, you have at least the elements of a good story. This situation, the strongest in your story, should be at the close, and the entire action should lead up to it with definite purpose and cumulative effect.

It has been said, and not without truth, that all the stories have been told. Perhaps it is true that the whole gamut of human emotions has been run. But there are new combinations to be made, of scenes, characters, motives and passion. It is the skill with which these component elements are handled that will prove the ability of the story-writer. The only thing that the author can contribute which will be wholly original and his own, will be the style—the manner. In this we will find the man himself, the force and character of his own personality.

It would be almost impossible to name the various classifications of the short story. There is the historical story, the story of contemporaneous life, the story of adventure or of incident, the instructive story (written obviously for the sake of the moral), the story of emotion and passion, and, best and most popular of all, the good, old-fashioned love story. It is of this that editors and readers never tire.

In telling the short story it is important to get *in medias res* at once. Strike the keynote at the beginning, with no uncertain touch. Have action at the outset, if possible, and continue it right through the story. The short story will not bear much descriptive work, no moralizing, no explanation regarding your characters. Have your characters explain themselves and their relation to each other by speech and action. Do not even describe their personal



appearance. If this must be given at all, let it be made a portion of the dialogue. From this let your readers draw the portraits for themselves.

The length of the short story is an important factor toward its success. As a rule, no short story that is to be used in a single number of any publication should exceed 6,000 words; this will make about eight pages of any of the larger magazines if without illustrations, and with illustrations, of course, more space will be occupied. For the household and domestic journals, stories may run anywhere from 1,500 to 5,000 words. For the literary weeklies 2,000 to 3,000 words is a fair length. For syndicate or newspaper use about 3,500 words is the extreme length, and from this down to 1,000 or 1,500 words. All other things being equal, a story which does not run to the maximum length permitted, stands the best chance of acceptance; for, with shorter stories, an editor may use in each number of his publication two or three, instead of one, and so make up with greater variety, and with material that will fit varied tastes.

Success in short-story writing—after one has good material—depends much upon business ability. A short-story writer should possess recent copies of journals of all classes that use such work. He should study them carefully, and from what they have used judge what they will probably like to use in the future. Study the length and style. A journal that is using in each number a half-dozen stories of 2,500 or 3,000 words each, will not be likely to make up future issues with two stories of 8,000 or 9,000 words each. A newspaper that uses every day a sketch of 1,000 or 1,500 words will not vary its rule to use your story of 5,000 words. The journal that makes a specialty of stories of incident and adventure will not care for stories of domestic life. The religious journals will not accept stories that are not of wholesome tone and which cannot be read in the family circle.

The average young writer seems to turn instinctively toward the sad and tragic aspects of life, when he dips into fiction. Tragic stories amount to fully ninety per cent. of all the fiction offered for sale. Thus it can readily be understood that editors who desire to give variety to their pages are all the time seeking anxiously for stories that will show the lighter and brighter phases of human nature. As these are in such a minority they are correspondingly difficult to secure. One who can write such, of thoroughly strong,

virile qualities, is certain of a market, of appreciation and of compensation from the outset.

A curious error that many young writers fall into is that of laboriously assuring editors that the story they have submitted for use in their fiction department is "a true story." Now, what an anomaly is this! Stop and think about it for a moment. You are supposed to be writing a work of fiction, not a narrative of events that have really happened. Do you think it will commend your work to an editor to say to him that your imagination is so slight that you cannot do that which you claim to have attempted, but that you were compelled to fall back lamely upon a mere something that you had learned or observed?

It is quite right to use suggestions from real life, or even incidents in their entirety, for the purpose of embellishing your story. But to put especial stress upon the fact that your characters or situations, or sometimes the stories entire are drawn from life, will prejudice your case before the court. Your story ceases to be a story in anything but the newspaper sense when you make it merely a narrative. That it is true, even though it has the semblance of fiction, does not make it any more impressive to the editor, who has long since learned the truth of the adage that there are more strange real things than the imagination ever has coined.

Let your story be a coinage from the brain, or a development from your observation and knowledge of life. Then submit it on its merits, not seeking by any comment or explanation to give it an interest that is not inherent. The editor will not set your explanation before his readers, even if he accepts your story; and it is from the readers' point of view, as well as from his own, that he will pass judgment; and—sometimes—he will not believe your statement that it is true, but will be so obtuse as to think that you are only trying to excite his interest by adventitious efforts.

It is not always, nor, indeed, often a recommendation to an editor to say that the story which you offer him has been produced without effort and without thought, and in the briefest time consistent with the amount of mere manual labor that has been performed upon it. We know that some writers, very young writers, hold contrary opinions. We have in our possession letters in evidence of this fact, and we are adding to that collection every day. One which came to hand not long ago was a curiosity. It stated that: "While at breakfast I decided to write a story. I did

not know what it would be about. Immediately upon leaving the table I went to my desk, took pen and paper, and wrote steadily until noon. The result I hand you, a completed story of about 5,000 words."

It is not necessary to state here what sort of a story this was which was composed and written in such an off-hand manner. But we wish to make some comments upon the method, which may serve as a warning to writers who think that the ability to perform such a task in such a manner, whether that performance be good or bad, is a mark of genius. The very worst point in this example is that our correspondent determined to write a story, and set about executing his purpose, without having any idea as to what the story would be about.

Good stories are not written in this way. The very first requisite for a story is an idea. The better the idea, and the more clearly and concisely it is worked out before pen is put to paper, the better the story will be. It is not necessary that the idea should even be kin to inspiration. We are not very great believers in inspiration. It is true that occasionally an idea comes to a writer like a flash of lightning, revealing to him in the imperceptible molecule of time that lies between two passing seconds, a picture which, if he can succeed in putting into words, will be welcomed by editors and will do much to put him forward in his career.

The idea for the story may be at the outset only a fragment. It may be but an isolated situation; or a striking incident, or a condition of life, or the relations between two beings; or it may be a partially evolved plot, which is but the skeleton, the framework upon which the story must be built with all the care and skill of which one is master. This requires a little time. It can hardly be done while you are annihilating your morning coffee and roll. Of course there are many instances of rapid accomplishment of good work. "Rasselas" is one that will occur to all. But we beg to suggest that the brain of the great lexicographer has not descended to many of us.

A more modern instance and one less well known, and it is perhaps needless to say one less worthy, was Mr. Frankfort Moore's production of "The Sale of a Soul"; a story of some 35,000 words, which the author assures us was done in eight days. However, "The Sale of a Soul" is a very good story; yet we do not cite this to the earnest literary worker as an example which it would be wise for him to emulate.



Rather let us call your attention to the "Vallima Letters" of the great-brained and great-souled Stevenson. Therein he tells with what infinite painstaking, with what severe self-criticism, with what doubting if after all the thing were good, he built up those stories which have enchanted and held captive the most intelligent readers of both hemispheres. Three days' work over a newspaper letter; sixty days devoted to the writing of 40,000 words, and thinking that he has done well even to have done so much, after days and days of toiling and of spoiling white paper, only to say at last, that he thinks he has a frame-work upon which he may later build when he is more in the mood.

It is certain that different men must work in different ways, and there are many who accomplish good work with remarkable rapidity. There are others to whom composition is slow and to whom every line comes with labor. Neither the one way nor the other is a certain mark of genius. The statement of methods by which work is produced will not alone commend it. But if any word will help with an editor, it is the honest statement that the work is a growth, the result of toil, of loving and painstaking effort.

To go back to Stevenson. He states that he once worked two days on a single page, and afterward felt that he should have worked three days upon it. Yet he adds that he does not think he could be accused of idleness. It was his rule to work six, or seven, or eight hours a day; and then to spend much of the balance of his waking hours in planning and in sowing seed which would bring fruit later.

The hours that are given to reflection are often the best hours of the writer's working day. Out of nothing nothing comes. He who rises from the breakfast table, saying to himself: "I will write a story to-day"; and knowing not what the story will be, having made no preparation for it, having given no thought to it, will be apt to produce a poor thing.

Fashions in fiction are subject to constant change. Editors do not often set the fashion, but they keep close watch upon the whims and changing fancies of their readers, and endeavor to supply the demand for something new as soon as that demand makes itself evident. This being true, it is incumbent upon those who write to give watchful consideration to the question, "What does the editor want?" By doing this one may be able to drive more directly toward the goal than would otherwise be the case.

Of course it is better to sell a story at the second or third, or even twentieth intention, than not to sell it at all. But infinitely better than this is it to understand the needs of editors so well that one may not have to waste great quantities of patience and postage stamps upon each story before finally getting it placed.

A journal may be in want of stories, and advertise that fact abroad; yet it is not so much stories in general as stories in particular that are wanted. Stories, after certain models, may be had galore for the asking. But if the editor recognizes a distinctly new trend in the tastes of his readers, it is the stories that will satisfy this taste that he is seeking. The writer who, with the editor, can see this want and fill it, is the writer who will succeed.

A few years ago we saw the public taking rapturously to stories of dialect. To be sure, in many of them were to be found plot, good character sketching, the attributes that go to make the story that all the world likes. Yet these were obscured in a mass of dialect that after a little became very tiresome reading—and to-day the dialect story can hardly be sold. Then we had the etching, which was often a character sketch in miniature; and we had the story of analysis, and the problem story; and to-day all these have made room again for the story of plot and *denouement*.

In telling the short story, felicity of expression is desirable, and fidelity to life—which is another name for realism. But these of themselves are not sufficient. Back of the method of telling is the story that is told.

The editors of a few of our publications are very definite in explaining to would-be contributors what they desire. *Munsey's Magazine* says: "We want stories. That is what we mean—*stories*, not dialect sketches, not washed-out studies of effete human nature, not weak tales of sickly sentimentality, not 'pretty' writing. This sort of thing in all its varieties comes by the car-load every mail. It is not what we want, but we do want fiction in which there is a story, action, force—a tale that means something; in short, a *story*."

The Harpers give this summary of conditions that seem to them to be of essential importance in fiction:

1. A well developed plot.
2. Good characterization.
3. Good, vigorous English.
4. A Moral tone.

5. A happy or artistic ending.
6. A well selected title, perhaps one which would arouse curiosity.

We have alluded elsewhere to the fact that the cheerful story is the one that editors are most glad to consider. The editor of a leading publication for the young returned a story with the comment that it could not be accepted as it was so very sad, and she did not like to try the feelings of her young readers with it. The wisdom of such a decision cannot be questioned.

Another editor in commenting upon the question of editorial needs, states: "It depends largely upon an editor's constituency, of course. But everywhere, I think, truth to life and a human interest, is the first demand. Realism is the fad of the moment, but romance will struggle with realism, and the most prosaic narrative must have something of the 'light that never was on sea or land' to make it attractive. The author, like the actor, must dress for the footlights. The novelist who fails to touch a chord vibrating with human sympathy will never please the editor, who, poor body, feels vicariously always the throb of the people's pulse."

In stating that the author must dress for the footlights we touch again upon the matter of using true stories. Aside from the fact that the "true story" is not properly a piece of fiction, is the fact that it would be extremely difficult to find a true story or an exact narrative that had the proper artistic ending that would make it adaptable to editorial needs. That is why the author "must dress for the footlights."

We have had, during recent years, decidedly too much of the erotic in fiction. Happily, this spasm has passed, and while it lasted it was confined mainly to publications of a minor grade. But it may be well for both writers and editors to remember the standard that was set up by Mr. Bonner when he began the publication of *The Ledger*. His ideal reader was an imaginary old lady with a family of daughters up among the Vermont hills; and everything considered for publication was with the question: "Would the old lady want her daughters to read this?" It would certainly be well for some writers to keep a similar old lady in mind. For while some peculiar interest of style or matter may give passing notoriety to a piece of fiction too highly spiced, the American public and the American editor, as a whole, prefer the wholesome.



In fiction, the timely is also to be considered. Timeliness in literature is supposed to be a necessary adjunct, mainly, to the article, essay, editorial, etc. But in fiction, whatever falls in with the interest of the hour is especially welcome. This is particularly true of publications which give limited space to fiction, publishing but one or two stories in each issue.

One of the syndicates said: "Whatever we use in the way of fiction will be in the shape of stories not exceeding 2,000 words in length, containing a definite plot, pathetic and humorous situations and treated in the most artistic manner." Another syndicate says: "Stories must be full of action and of perfect moral tone."

From the editorial views here presented, we may gather that the present editorial want in fiction is, in brief: A plot, plenty of action, a healthy, wholesome tone, strong characterization, vivid interest and artistic treatment.

The brain of the story-writer should be like the sensitized plate of the camera. All situations which come under his observation should be photographed instantly and without effort upon this brain; and in such clear and orderly arrangement that they may be called forth and used whenever need occurs.

The habit of observation should be brought down to the final analysis. In looking at a landscape one should see not only that the earth is green and the sky blue, but he should see the details of the picture; the kinds of grasses, the foliage of the trees, the tones of the color of the sky; the whole should be there so that a word-picture could be painted; not at length, but with those swift distinct touches that make it real. If one sees a woman, he should see at once her dress, her facial characteristics, her carriage, whether her hair be brown or blue, her eyes green or black. He should observe the quality of her voice, so that he can reproduce it to the reader. Characters never appeal to the reader as faithful portraits unless the writer has put into them some attributes which have come under his observation in actual people. Perhaps some of the greatest characters of fiction, characters which have lived and become household words, have been portraits in part, if not in whole.

In regard to the technique of the short story, it cannot be too much emphasized that conversation should play a most important part. A professor of rhetoric and English language in one of our

leading universities said lately that the story of the future would be made up almost entirely of conversation. "Write your story as long as you please," he said, "then substitute conversation for description wherever you can." Another, commenting upon method in short story work, said: "It is not necessary to say that a woman is a snarling, grumpy person. *Bring the old lady in and let her snarl.*"

## CHAPTER VII

The Literary Hack—His Wide Field—Goldsmith's Description—The Knowledge and Ability Required—How Large Incomes are Earned—Various Lines of Work—Drawbacks—Analysis of Income.

THE literary hack is a sort of all-trades' jack; and in this he has the advantage over any writer along special lines, in that he can thus make use of everything that comes to his net. All sorts of material are of utility to him, and by their aid he can employ profitably every moment of time that he wishes to give to his desk. He can also vary his work as he will, and get that relaxation which comes quite as much from varying one's employment as from absolute idleness. He has the advantage of always being able to keep an immense number of articles in the field, and so may look confidently each day for acceptances and the consequent practical emoluments in the shape of payments from editors.

Probably the beginner would be surprised to learn how wide a field the literary hack, if he is competent, may occupy. Take a score of journals of the day, and look over their tables of contents. Throw aside the stories and see how many different classifications may yet be made of the articles contained in the lot. And, aside from the articles which are the product of specialists, any one of them may have been written by any well-informed literary worker.

Ever since Goldsmith immortalized the woes of the "literary hack," the world has had before its eyes a picture of a distressed author working drearily in a garret chamber, haunted by bailiffs, deserted by friends, often cold, ragged and hungry:

"Where the Red Lion peering o'er the way,  
Invites each passing stranger that can pay;  
Where Calvert's butt and Parson's black champagne  
Regale the drabs and bloods of Drury Lane;  
There in a lonely room, from bailiffs snug,  
The muse found Scroggin stretched beneath a rug;  
A nightcap deck'd his brows instead of bay,  
A cap by night, a stocking all the day."

Perhaps Goldsmith need not have been a literary hack had he husbanded the earnings of his pen with a little more care and



common-sense; but his failing was one that is common to many men of genius—a habit of trusting too implicitly to the morrow to care for itself. By his pen he earned large sums, and spent them lavishly. He was always either in debt to his publishers and his friends, or swimming upon the crest of a momentary wave of opulence.

Yet Goldsmith was hardly a literary hack, in the sense that the term is now used. He was too much a creature of moods to fasten himself to the methodical work of our modern “all-round writer.”

The literary hack of the latter portion of the nineteenth century is one who is able to turn his hand—and his pen—to the widest variety of work. The whole field of newspaper and magazine journalism is his; and in the interim of writing short stories, articles of travel, interviewing the latest lion of the hour, or composing a sheaf of couplets and quatrains, or a sonnet upon the sweetness and light, he turns his attention to producing a problem novel or a new story of adventure to rival “Treasure Island.”

His occupation, his place in the literary scale, and more than all else, his emoluments, have recently been the subject of some discussion in the periodical press. It is claimed on the one hand that he is still Goldsmith’s rival in the matter of duns and make-shifts, and that such must ever be the case of a literary worker who has no definite connection with any publication or publishing house, but who must depend upon the cold chance of any editor’s favor for the wherewithal to compensate his landlady for the current week’s board and lodging. On the other hand, it is alleged that the competent hack-writer is the only literary worker who is removed from the harassing fear of never being able to make both ends meet.

There are arguments both for and against the occupation of the hack-writer. He is the distinct opposite of the specialist. He must needs be a more versatile man than the latter, but in the nature of things he is rarely so thorough or so well informed upon any particular line. To be eminently successful he must be broadly educated; perhaps not so thoroughly grounded in the knowledge of the schools as in knowledge of the world. He must possess in the widest degree that “general information” which comes from omnivorous reading, from travel, and from association with all sorts and conditions of men, combined with a keen insight into human nature, the ability to keep pace with the progress of the

world, with new literature, the development of the arts and sciences, sociological and metaphysical questions. He must have the ability to gather this information as he runs, and, if not thoroughly to digest it, yet to store it away in his mind in such an orderly manner that it may be instantly accessible when needed.

The qualities which go to make the competent and successful editorial writer upon a great newspaper are much the same as those which are demanded in the hack-writer; except that the former must often have the ability to go further beneath the surface, more into the causes of things, and into their effect; the hack-writer touches matters more upon the surface and, as a rule, writes more for the entertainment of the reader than for his instruction.

As an example of his range of work we will cite the career of a well-known New York journalist who is by his own confession a hack-writer. He disclaims any higher purpose in following his profession than to meet the needs of the hour and the demands of editors. His name is signed to work in a dozen current publications at this moment upon our desk. In one, an illustrated monthly of the highest class, he has a short story of some 6,000 words. It is a good story—that goes without saying—or it would not have been admitted to the pages of the periodical in question—yet to the reader who is also a writer and who, in consequence, reads between the lines, to discover the method of the author, it bears evidences of being a “manufactured” story. The story does not show the qualities which contribute in any manner toward making a great story. It is, on the contrary, rather upon the order of newspaper work than of magazine work. It is rapid in its movement, bright in its conversations, but in character drawing, in atmosphere, in the qualities which appeal most to the heart and brain, it is clearly deficient. However, it serves its purpose well, that purpose being none other than to draw a check for an hundred dollars, or perhaps for half as much more, from the treasury of the publisher. A writer of no great reputation, but one who would have written this story less after the hack-writer’s manner, and more after the manner of the careful, conscientious and competent literary worker, might have received \$250 or \$300 for it. The difference in price would have been due to the difference in quality, not to quantity. And it may interest some of our readers to know that a writer whose name was the fancy of the hour, might have received \$500, or even more, from the same publication for a story of equal length.

This is one drawback in the career of the acknowledged hack-writer; he can never expect to receive the very highest prices for his work. However good the work that he turns out, occasionally may be, he will never reach a place among the exalted few who receive fancy prices. He becomes well-known, but never famous. Editors are always glad to examine his work, for they know that he understands their needs well enough to avoid troubling them with anything that is clearly unavailable for their particular use. This does not mean that his articles are always accepted at the first intention, but he is always accorded a respectful hearing.

The next place that we find his name is in a domestic publication of high rank, signed to an article in which are discussed the nutritive food value and hygienic qualities of certain foods generally seen upon our tables. He does not go very deeply into the matter, and perhaps at times a scientist or a chemist might be able to pick flaws in his statements. But he has read up on the matter to good purpose, and as his training has taught him that an error is worse than a crime, you may be reasonably sure that his article will bear all ordinary tests for accuracy.

In a daily newspaper we find an interview signed by him, the subject being a famous statesman making his first visit to this country. In this, aside from the work of the interviewer proper, he has given us a succinct but comprehensive review of the life and career of the statesman. He not only knows the ordinary facts of his history, such as may be gleaned from any encyclopedic or biographical article, but he is familiar with the measures he has advocated, the principles for which he stands, the great speeches he has made, the men with whom he has been affiliated, as well as those to whom he has been placed in opposition. Perhaps it was only because the writer possessed such comprehensive information that he was able to get an audience with the distinguished visitor and draw him into the conversation which enabled him to so well serve the needs of his paper. If he had been a tyro, or if he had not been able to show himself at least no stranger to the distinguished man's career, the latter would probably have brought the audience to a quick termination.

Other articles from the same hand are: "In the Steerage of an Ocean Liner"; "Coffee Growing in Mexico" (both these articles evidently worked up from old note-books of travel); an article on the "Chinese Quarter of New York," and so on *ad infinitum*.



Estimating the value of the whole by our knowledge of current market prices for such work, we would judge that the output for the month returned to this fortunate hack-writer was probably four hundred to five hundred dollars.

This will seem to the general writer to be above the average monthly compensation of even those who are most favorably regarded in editorial sanctums. This is true, yet we have reason to believe that this particular writer does not fall far short of this average month after month and year after year. This is better compensation than can be expected by even the most favored writer who confines himself to one or two publications or to a single line of work. It would, too, require an extremely successful book to return as much in royalties as this writer will earn within a year.

It is quite possible that this is an exceptional hack-writer. Yet we know others who do an equally varied line of work, and who receive quite as good prices. If their total earnings do not amount to so much it is either because they do not apply themselves so industriously, and so produce as much work, or because they do not study their market to equal advantage, and so fail to reach the maximum money reward.

An unpleasant feature of the profession of the hack-writer is that it is utterly destructive to any high or legitimate literary ambition. The writer soon contents himself with producing work of a mediocre quality, and such ambition as he may have had at the outset to excel in any particular line, or to produce work which will live, is lost in the desire to keep himself well represented in many publications and to gather in all the shekels possible from such work.

There is another class of hack-writers who are deserving of rather more sympathy. These are men who are specialists along some particular line, but whose income from such work is not sufficient to provide for their needs; so they devote a portion of their time to the journalistic hurly-burly, in order to make it possible to do that which is nearest their hearts. They look with more or less disgust upon the stories and articles which are merely pot boilers, and are annoyed when they find that they have become better known to the public by these than by the work which is the main purpose of their lives.

Yet, if one will be a hack-writer, let him make up his mind to become a thoroughly competent one, to take his place at the head

of the procession. To do this, as we have already said, one must constantly be acquiring information. Bear in mind that there is no item of information, no matter how trivial it may seem at the moment, which may not eventually be wanted in your work. Read and observe continually. Keep posted upon all questions of the day. Familiarize yourself with history, biography, read travel work and travel whenever the opportunity presents. Keep note-books and be methodical about arranging your information in such shape that you may find it when wanted.

The hack-writer, and in fact writers of all classes, will find it of the utmost value constantly to make clippings from newspapers and periodicals, and to file these methodically. But to the hack-writer more than to any other will these be of value. Some of the most successful men in this line of work have such voluminous files of magazine and newspaper clippings as constitute a complete current history of various subjects. In this way some have histories of certain countries; of certain industries; of certain social movements; of men who have become famous, or who are steadily growing into fame. Some day they find their files of value, when the country or the industry or the man springs into sudden prominence. And then Jones, who has been less methodical, wonders how Brown happened to have all this material at his fingers' ends just when it was needed and when it was of money value. Or perhaps Brown, in looking over his files, finds that his clippings are so complete upon certain topics that he has before him all the information necessary to make a valuable and comprehensive magazine article—and he forthwith does it.

Some years since *The Forum* contained an article concerning the literary hack, that was rather widely commented on as showing the inner facts of the life of an ordinary literary worker of this class. It claimed to be the actual experience of a hack-writer, and its purport was to show how an unpretentious member of this guild had succeeded in securing an income of \$5,000 per year, while avowedly writing with no higher purpose than to produce that which would sell.

There was nothing remarkable about the article, and doubtless the experiences given could be paralleled by a dozen other writers. To earn that income, as we have suggested above, by writing articles and stories for the newspapers and magazines, is not an extraordinarily difficult attainment. Of course, one must first be

equipped for the work. He must be possessed of a wide fund of general knowledge, and this must be so classified and arranged that it is ready for use wherever and whenever needed. He must be able to write good short stories, or novels, with sufficient merit to make them salable, in order to keep himself occupied when there are no other definite lines of work just ready for his hand. Above all, he must be industrious and must pay great attention to the market. The latter factor is an important one. It does not matter how much stuff he may turn off, if he is not able to sell it to advantage his work will count for little.

In analyzing the income of this hack-writer we will suppose that he received no higher compensation than \$5 per thousand words. At that rate he has to produce 3,000 words per day to accomplish his aim. A fair portion of his work must have gone into periodicals that pay from \$10 to \$20 per thousand words, and thus have materially reduced the necessary amount of output.

An unpretentious newspaper woman of our acquaintance, who works steadily upon a great daily, once told us that her work outside her own paper brought an income of about \$1,500 per year. This seems to us a more noteworthy accomplishment in the way of literary earnings than the \$5,000 secured by the self-confessed hack, who gave his whole time to his widely diversified work.

After the publication of *The Forum* article, the other side of the literary hack question was given by a writer in one of the Eastern papers. He stated that with the same apparent industry he had been able to secure an income that averaged only \$2,000 per year. The difference between the two was probably this: The man who made the \$5,000 had a higher and wider range, greater talent and greater versatility. He would sell for \$50 an article for which the other man would receive but \$20. Although each might devote the same time to his article, it was quite probable that the finished product would differ in value. And it is very nearly certain that the two would go to different markets. To sum up the whole matter of the earning power of a competent literary hack, it might be fairly stated that his average will be found somewhere between these two extremes.

While upon the subject of literary incomes, we may repeat the statement made to us by a great New York editor to the effect that the best profit and the surest income is to be had by writing books. This statement will be questioned by many, but this editor



in commenting upon certain men whose work was no longer to be found in the magazines, said: "These men will not write short stories, because they can make a great deal more writing long ones."

Further investigation showed that those who were under consideration were engaged in writing novels, of which each produced from one to three per year. They looked sharply to the financial end of their work, selling the serial rights first to the magazines, syndicates, or elsewhere, and then selling the book rights on a royalty. In this manner they secured an income that was not wholly dependent upon the work done each day. It is true it often happens that a writer finds great difficulty in selling his first long story, or book manuscript at all. But if he goes to the right place, and his long work is equally as good as his shorter efforts, it is no more difficult to find a place for the one than for the other.

## CHAPTER VIII

The Specialist—What He Has Accomplished in Other Fields—His Place in Literature—What He May Achieve—The Varied Lines for the Specialist—The Training of the Specialist.

**A**MONG those who play their part in the larger activities of life, the "one-idea" man has ever been more or less the butt of the would-be humorist. Possibly, there is some reason for this, for the man who absorbs himself in a single idea does necessarily, and as a natural consequence, withdraw himself somewhat from intimate companionship with his fellows. The one idea becomes the central purpose of his life, and to it all other things must be subservient.

"He who laughs last laughs best," is an old adage; and it is often the one-idea man who in the end laughs best, and at the expense of those who made him the mark for their jibes. In finance, we have often seen the man of one idea progress steadily toward his goal—that of becoming one of the money kings of the world. In art, we have seen the man who steadily made his art the great *motif* of his life outrank all his fellows. One-idea men have become the great generals of the world; the great inventors, those who have done most to assist the progress of civilization, were men of a single great idea and purpose. The great reformers of the world have been men of a single idea, and they have spent their lives nobly in and for the accomplishment of their single great purpose.

In literature, the one-idea man is often a recluse, a student. In another chapter we have instanced the qualities which help to make the successful hack-writer. Almost none of these are necessary to the specialist. Instead of mingling with the world, he takes a little portion of it and observes and studies and analyzes that with his whole soul. While his range is narrow individually, collectively it may be of the widest. The specialist has his place in every walk of literature—but there is only one walk for each one of the species. The humorist may be just as much a specialist as the student of some obscure branch of natural science; but it would be rare indeed to find the two combined.

We have instanced the fact that the hack-writer may hope to achieve fame, within rather narrow limitations. His is the fame that comes to the industrious and persevering writer within the circle of editorial sanctums, but not often in the eye of the great public. The specialist has, as a rule, a scope that is still more narrow. He may become known and appreciated by a few editors, those of publications of a single class, rather than to the guild as a whole; and through them he will become known to the limited number of readers who comprise their class.

But there are some compensations. Where he is known, his name becomes a household word. He is looked up to. His work is looked forward to, and waited for, and all that he says is accepted as authoritative. His work is usually well paid, and it brings him a certain honor and dignity wherever it becomes known.

In the above we are speaking of the serious work of the specialist. While it is true, as we have said, that the humorous writer may be a specialist, it is not he nor his fellows whom we wish to consider here.

The true specialist—the man who follows his specialty in order that he may write and inform the world upon it, is usually a man of a scientific turn of mind. His specialty may be any one of the abstruse or natural sciences. He may study the stars, and endeavor to popularize knowledge concerning them. He may be a chemist, and add continually to our information regarding the drugs which have been given to the world to minister to the needs of mankind; he will study their sources, and will continually discover in the three great kingdoms constituents which add to the known chemistry of the universe.

He may take a less far mental reach, and be simply an agriculturist who studies the laws of nature in their relation to plant life; he observes the unfolding of bud and flower, the growth of tree and fruit, the germination of seeds, the causes which conduce to barrenness or fruition, and gives this knowledge through the agricultural journals to those whom it may most benefit. Perhaps he goes a little further, and by careful experimentation, by crossing fruit with fruit and flower with flower, adds to the wealth of our horticulture.

He may study the minerals of the earth; discover their location and the ways by which they may be made most useful to mankind. He may be a traveler, continually browsing about odd corners of



the world, and adding to our knowledge of peoples, their habits and customs, making or correcting geography, or teaching one portion of the world the value of another.

The avenues of occupation for the specialist are almost without end. He may not be an original investigator, like these we have named, but instead devote his talents to summing up and arranging the knowledge which has been gathered by others. The accurate and competent compiler stands among our most valued literary workers. He may be a biographical or historical writer; he may collect information upon almost any subject by careful browsing in libraries, and from this make either magazine articles or books which take first rank in literary importance; or an essayist who, watching the course of events upon the stage of the world, draws therefrom deductions that make the leader in the day's newspaper or the finished article in to-morrow's review.

The specialist may be, as we have said, a humorist, who devotes his days, and sometimes his nights, to conjuring from his brain or twisting from the facts of his experience, humorous thoughts or situations which may be moulded into the comic dialogue, the illustrated joke, or the mirth-provoking verselet; or a writer of verses alone, who, without great poetic faculties, studies the technique and the niceties of his art until he can turn out almost at will the couplet or quatrain which expresses a thought in the minimum of words, or the cold and polished sonnet, or the dainty *vers-de-societe* which editors welcome so gladly.

The short-story writer is often a specialist, turning his entire attention to the art of telling stories which, within the limit of a few thousand words, will give the whole life history of his characters on the one hand, or upon the other, present a single episode in those lives in such masterly manner, in such vivid and brilliant word-coloring, that the picture is burned upon the brain. Writing juvenile stories is a specialty which many have followed with immense profit and satisfaction. The writing of "feature articles" for the daily press is a specialty, and one which is growing with the rapid development of the syndicates. The writing of practical agricultural articles, practical mechanical articles and of travel articles for newspapers and magazines are each specialties which are followed by many, but which afford fields that are never overcrowded. It is perhaps even permissible to say that the novelist is a specialist; for it is often true that the novelist of to-day has

been the literary hack, or the all-round writer, of a past decade, who, finding his tastes and powers developing in the direction of the elaborated story, has finally given himself wholly to that work for no other reason than that he has found it to be the thing which he can do best, and with most profit and satisfaction. Perhaps the question of profit alone might be the factor that determined his course, and were this eliminated, he might return to-day to the ranks of the hack-writer, or all-round journalist.

The specialist may minimize his work, if he chooses, to the last degree. We know specialists who are specialists on the one item of paint alone. They know paint as a child knows his A B C's. They know the bases for all paints; how the crude material is obtained; how it is treated, how mixed, how handled in the factory, how put upon the trade, the shape in which it goes to the consumer and its value. They know the durability of colors—or their lack of durability—the seasons at which they should be used, the method in which paint should be applied, the best brushes for certain uses. Knowing all these things about even so limited a subject, they can write without end for journals of many classes. Their work is not confined, as one might think, to trade or technical journals, but they have their place in the agricultural papers, fill space in the newspapers, do occasional articles for illustrated papers and even break into the magazines. For here is one thing for writers of all classes to remember: Practical work, written by one who knows thoroughly that of which he writes, has the widest possible range. Articles of information are regarded kindly by all editors.

The course of one who would become a writer upon a specialty, is plain. First, know your subject. If you are to write about mechanics, study machinery as you would your spelling book. Study it not only from the outside, but get your knowledge from the ground up by becoming—if you are not so already—a practical machinist. Go to work in a machine shop, and learn how to run an engine, a lathe, an emery wheel, a planer. Learn the care of machinery, how it is built, its uses, its life; the more competent you become personally as a machinist, the better able you will be to write about machinery for others. Then when you are ready to write, select the journals of your especial class, and tell them anything you have to say upon the subject, that is *new*.

So with agriculture. Work in the ground until you are familiar with all the processes of nature, from seed time to harvest. Observe,

learn something new that is of practical value, and the editors of agricultural journals will be glad to give you a hearing.

We might go on in this way through the entire list of trade and technical and class journals; there is not one of them but that affords an opening of some sort for the specialist.



## CHAPTER IX

The Descriptive Article—Qualities Necessary to a Descriptive Writer—The Wide Field for His Work—Newspapers and Magazines Use Such Articles—Subjects Found on Every Hand and in Every-Day Life.

IT is not at all necessary that the successful writer of the descriptive article should have a mind of that especial quality which is denominated as "brilliant." The careful, plodding, painstaking writer in this line of work is often the one who arrives at the truest comprehension of his subject, and who is thus enabled to lay it most truly and realistically before his readers. Inventive genius, such as may be required in the development of plot or the elaboration of the novel, might rather stand in the way of the descriptive writer than otherwise. In his effort to be brilliant and interesting he might err by not being accurate; or in the effort at development and elaboration, he might introduce irrelevant matter, which would make his article verbose and heavy. Perhaps he should be something more than a mere dull plodder, but the principal characteristics and abilities demanded are only those which are common to any man of ordinarily good mind and education. True, these qualities may be, and should be, developed and refined by practice. Indeed, so they will be, for in every branch of the literary art, practice perfects.

The descriptive writer must be able to grasp at once the salient and interesting points of the thing which he is about to describe. If the thing is of large importance, this will not be so difficult; but then, he should have the faculty of selection and should be able to discard intuitively and apparently without effort the dull and uninteresting attributes of his subject. If his matter is in itself of slight importance, then his ingenuity will be taxed to select those features of first worth, and enlarge upon and make the most of them. Here the ability to write entertainingly upon little things will come into play.

The ability to select and to depict tersely and vigorously the more noteworthy points of a subject is a first requisite. Next comes the power to do this picturesquely. But truth to what is,

must never be sacrificed for the sake of picturesque effect. Facts, and strict adherence to the truth, are never to be slighted in descriptive writing.

An examination of any half dozen newspapers of the day will show that while one writer has been able to take a most commonplace subject, and invest it with an interest which holds the attention through every paragraph of his article, another, having far better material to start with, has treated it in so commonplace a manner that the reading is a task rather than a recreation. In both articles one end has been attained—the information has been placed before the reader, but the other end, that of interesting the reader in his subject and affording him pleasure while gaining knowledge, has not been attained.

The field for the descriptive article is of the widest. Every magazine, illustrated or otherwise, every syndicate, every newspaper, the juvenile journals, religious journals, trade and technical publications are open to it in some form. This may easily be proved by picking up at random the journals of the week in these different classes. The descriptive article has a prominent place in each and every one of them.

The range of the descriptive article is as wide as the field for its publication. The material for it may be supplied by agriculture, either in giving an account of some special culture, in writing of the resources and attractions of some particular agricultural region, in describing improved methods of work or in recounting in homely phrase the every-day life of the average agricultural worker, as was done recently in an article entitled "A Day on the Farm." The field of applied mechanics furnishes a basis for frequent articles of this sort. These may be either technical articles for trade journals or articles written in a popular style for the general reader. We have recently seen examples of the latter in magazine articles describing the famous Krupp Gun Works, the manufacture of armor plates for naval vessels in our own country, a visit to a dynamite factory, etc. The above have been elaborately illustrated articles in our leading publications.

The student of natural history will write descriptive articles for the purely scientific journals, or for publications in which science is popularized for the masses, as in *Popular Science*; or he may follow the lead of Mr. Ernest Ingersoll, or of the late William Hamilton Gibson, and clothe his subject with so much of interest

and beauty that it will command for itself a place, as did their work, in the greatest of our magazines, from whose pages it will appeal to the general reader.

But nature, our great mother, is the store-house and treasure-house for the writer in more particulars than this. The natural wonders of the world—mountains, rivers, glaciers, cascades, deserts—may be treated again and again by different writers, so only that a new view-point is secured. The Falls of Niagara have perhaps been more written about than any other of the natural wonders of the world. Yet, only a little time since, a young writer, viewing the Falls for the first time, found himself impressed with thoughts regarding them which had not before been given to the world in print. He went to his room, within view and sound of the great masses of falling waters, wrote his article and found it was accepted at once, because in itself it was new, though his subject was as old perhaps as the world.

The polite arts and the handicrafts serve the purpose of the descriptive writer. The opening of an art gallery, the first night of a popular *prima donna*, a visit to the studio of a sculptor, to a shipyard, are material for him. The handiwork of the potter, the taxidermist, the botanical collector, all afford work for his pen. All great events are within his scope, the review of an army, the coronation of a king, the inauguration of a president, may be treated in such a manner that they become more interesting than fiction.

Pens are common things. Yet only the other day a well known writer put out a syndicate article describing their manufacture. Lead pencils are common, yet each one of us would stop to read an article describing the various details of their production—where the wood comes from, how the graphite is prepared and put within its case, the methods by which they are manufactured so cheaply, the numbers consumed, etc.

A great newspaper office upon election night, or when great events are happening, has more than once been a theme for the ready writer, and will be so many times again. Mr. Julian Ralph once did a most notable article describing the scenes in Washington on inauguration day. Mr. Richard Harding Davis did an equally notable article describing a single great street in a great city. Mr. Crawford, of the New York *Herald*, did a famous magazine article telling how a president was elected. This same writer did a valu-



able series of articles describing the different departments and branches of the government: as the House, the State, the Supreme Court, the various Departments, etc.

The wheat pit in Chicago is the more or less direct subject of a financial article in hundreds of papers every day. Yet recently, when a corner was being manipulated, a writer who did not touch the financial aspects of the matter, published an article which was a most brilliant pen picture of the pit and the men in it, and of the methods by which fictitious quantities of wheat were bought and sold, and fortunes made and lost at the waving of a hand.

Enough has been said here to show that there is almost no subject, great or small, which may not afford a motif for the descriptive article; but there are grades in this work as in all other, and descriptive writers will vary from the man or woman who does an article upon some commonplace theme, in a commonplace manner, for a commonplace third-rate journal, to the one who looks for material that is new or of the largest value, or that may be treated in a new way, and then does the best that his literary art will permit in putting it before the public.

Do not imagine that descriptive writing is necessarily an inferior class of work. Mr. Kipling did not find it beneath his dignity to do a description of salmon fishing on the Columbia River; nor did some of our leading litterateurs neglect to record in descriptive articles of various sorts, their impressions of the Columbian Exhibition.

## CHAPTER X

Verse-Writing—Young Writers Incline Toward Poetry—Amateurs Deluge  
Editors with Poor Verses—Offerings Greatly in Excess of Demands—  
The Market Limited—The Sort of Work Wanted—Prices Paid.

THE advice usually given to literary aspirants whose inclinations turn toward the poetic form of expression, is to avoid writing verse. At least they are warned against it if their purpose is to earn money by their pen, or to secure a definite place in literature. They are told, by both editors and experienced writers, that verse is a drug in the market. They will find by experience that comparatively few, even among the literary journals that are free buyers of prose matter, will purchase verse at all. The bulk of that which is published is contributed gratuitously by young poets who are willing to give away their work for the satisfaction of seeing it in print.

Editors will tell you that for every one poem that can possibly be made use of, they receive fifty which must be returned. The majority of these are of course very poor stuff and are not worthy of publication anywhere. But perhaps ten per cent. of the whole are fairly good verse, as well entitled to publicity as the average prose contribution. Yet editors are not unwarranted in their honest endeavors to discourage the poetical aspirant, for this is the most difficult and unpromising of all the literary pathways for a beginner to follow.

Still, one who has any decided talent in this direction, and who is capable of rising superior to all obstacles and discouragements, will find by a careful analysis of the entire situation that the case is not absolutely hopeless. There are perhaps a score of publications in the United States which buy poetry and pay for it liberally, and which are distinct encouragers of young verse-writers who show any indications of genius. When verse is accepted, the financial emoluments are decidedly better than for even the best prose work by authors of equal reputation.

Of course all know that our leading illustrated magazines—*Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *The Century*, *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, *The Cosmopolitan*—are buyers of verse. To these may be added *The At-*

*lantic*, Boston; *Lippincott's*, Philadelphia; *The Outlook*, *The Independent*, and *The Churchman*, New York; and some others among the secular and the religious press. A few daily papers, notably the *New York Sun*, give careful consideration to verse, and buy at good prices such as is adapted to their needs. *The Youth's Companion*, Boston, is a buyer of verses and jingles for children, and of poems that appeal both to youths and to mature readers. *The Companion*, in this as in all other things, is among the most courteous and liberal publications. Many of the Sunday School journals buy poems not necessarily of a distinctly religious type, but such as will interest young readers, and which are of a wholesome and uplifting character.

As the question of compensation is always a pertinent one to writers, we may state that even those who do not succeed in selling their wares to the leading magazines, may yet expect very satisfactory rewards. From a memorandum before us, we find that *The Outlook* paid one writer \$15 for 121 lines of blank verse, and at another time \$10 for twenty-nine lines. It will be apparent here that not only length but quality as well is a determining factor with this journal, in regard to the value of poetical contributions. *The Independent*, for a poem containing nine four-line stanzas, paid \$8. *Lippincott's*, for a four line stanza, \$2. *The Churchman*, for 38 lines, \$2.50; for a sonnet, \$1.00, and for three four-line stanzas, \$1.00. All except the last of these journals may be taken to represent about the average in their rates of compensation for poetry. *The Churchman* seems to be decidedly below the average, and in its rate about on a par with the household and domestic magazines. The illustrated magazines of course pay much more liberally.

One reason why editors are so much inclined to discourage young verse writers, is that they have found that the majority do not send clear, concise, forcible verse, and do not show a very great perception of rhyme or rhythm, and little of true poetic instinct and feeling. A great many half-educated people (not entirely those of tender years) imagine that they can write poetry, and it is their effusions that flood the mails and discourage editors.

In looking over the periodicals of the day, we find more poetry in the form of the sonnet than of any other one class. We may reasonably argue from this that the writer of verse who can produce a sonnet that is worthy both in its beauty and the originality of



thought, and whose conception is not marred in its execution, has found one of the best roads that poets can take to the editorial heart.

We find too, that poems of nature, both in the form of the sonnet and otherwise, have a charm about them not only to the reader, but apparently to the editor as well. We find that most of these poems of nature are brief. In fact long poems of any sort are not wanted.

A poem may be faultless in construction, yet if it has not in it something that appeals to the soul, it will hardly find its way into the pages of a good publication. Some young poets err by studying the art of verse-making until they can construct a poem that is technically faultless, then do this, without much regard to the thought embodied in their flawless lines, and wonder why they are not successful.

There are two forms of verse in desuetude of late years, that appear to be again becoming popular. These are the rondeau and the rondel, both musical, and both difficult. So long as brevity is a prime factor in poetry, these certainly should find place.

It requires but a glance through the leading publications of the month, to show that quatrains and couplets are steadily in demand.

In our household monthlies we find poems that touch upon the brighter side of the home life—verse that finds a responsive echo in the heart of the wife and mother who has few aspirations outside of the home. With these publications, sentiment is more looked for than perfect form.

The juvenile publications, including some of the Sunday School weeklies, use and pay well for little stories prettily told in verse and for jingles that may be illustrated, for very young readers.

The editor of a leading newspaper wrote to a correspondent as follows: "The poetry most in demand now-a-days is that kind which appeals most directly to people who are busy. Long poems, no matter what the subject may be, are frowned upon by editors. The most successful poet is the one who can put the best thought into the smallest space. It would seem almost impossible for one in this day and age to write poetry that would be new—that would touch upon some new theme of life. But that is what editors want, or rather that is what the public wants. The editors are mere middlemen, who form the connecting links between the producers

and the consumers. Your own observations have probably impressed upon you the fact that the people in general are not given to deep reading. They want to be amused rather than instructed. If you can preach a sermon and arouse a laugh at the same time, you do well. If you can't do that, try to raise the laugh anyhow, and your reader is grateful. That is newspaper 'poetry.'"

Simplicity in verse writing is a desirable quality. If one would cultivate simplicity, the writing of verses for children will afford excellent practice. To write poems which will appeal to the young mind is a feat toward which it is worth while to devote one's best efforts. One who has never undertaken the task may think it beneath him, requiring so little ability that the effort is really not worth while. We caution you against this error, for you may find the work beyond you rather than beneath. To write verses for children requires directness, and a mastery of simple words, in which plain, interesting and attractive ideas may be expressed.

Desirable verses of this sort bring fair rates of compensation from a number of journals. *The Youth's Companion*, *St. Nicholas*, and various Sunday School publications, are all glad to examine work of this sort. The prices for such poems of two or three to five short stanzas range from \$1.00 to \$20.00 each.

Three publications, especially instanced above, like verses filled with fun and spirit, mainly for its boy readers, or something dainty, containing a bright thought or telling some old half-forgotten story in the history of by-gone days, or poems that are helpful and beautiful without being too much upon the religious order. *The Companion* also has a children's page, where poems and jingles for the very youngest readers are used.

Sometimes the criticism of editors more than anything else will help a young writer to determine wherein his work is faulty. One very young writer had been a somewhat favorite contributor of verse to a certain periodical. In the course of time he sent a poem to the editor, which he felt certain would be accepted because it was suited to an especial season. But the discriminating editor found the lines somewhat "singsongy," and sent them back with this note:

"There is really nothing out of the way with these verses, except that they seem to be a little on the machine order. Some of your work sounds so sincere that I dislike to take anything that appears less so."

This note taught the writer two things: First, that he must be more careful as to the quality of the work that he sent out; second, that the editor of that magazine was beginning to take a real interest in him and his work.

Another editor returned a poem with this criticism: "I like these verses very much, but the sentiment embodied in them is one so often used that it detracts from the fine expression you have given it." This taught another lesson: it was that editors are not fond of hackneyed subjects, in verse, more than in other lines of literary work.

A young writer who is earnest and who desires to succeed in his profession will take these hints in the kindly manner in which they are intended.

We are told constantly, and with a great deal of truth, that editors are continually looking for and hoping to see appear above the horizon the "new writer," who can do such work as will attract attention to his journal and supply the much needed infusion of new blood. No editor will deny this assertion as far as regards the story writer, the novelist, the humorist, etc., but as to the young poet,—a shrug of the shoulders will best signify his feeling and belief in that direction. There is no branch of the literary career upon which one can enter where a struggle in the beginning is so assured as with the young poet. Editors will receive his offerings grudgingly, often with silent contempt, and be quite ready to send them home with a "Returned with thanks," before even examining the first line.

This would not be the case if the would-be poets understood the work that they attempt. But when they send imperfect, weak and silly verses, that have neither thought nor form, verses that perhaps have been praised in the home circle or among non-critical friends, and keep on sending such day after day and week after week, without any evidence of improvement or attempt at improvement, editors can hardly be blamed for getting a little weary.

Do not attempt to write verses for publication unless you have made something of a study of the technique of poetry. There is no branch of literature which can so nearly be measured by meters and bounds as regards form. Imperfect meters and rhymes are not allowable, even among the second rate publications.

Long poems are not wanted by publications of any sort. Magazine editors not infrequently receive long narrative poems, which



if printed would occupy from a half dozen to a half hundred pages. But it is needless to say that these are not printed. It requires only a glance at the publications on any news-stand to show that the poems accepted are, almost without exception, brief. And it would seem that the more brief they are the better chances of editorial favor.

No matter how well the young poet may do his work, no matter how conscientious and careful and painstaking he is, he is very certain to receive repeated declinations. These will be his portion even more than the portion of the story writer or other literary worker, for the simple reason that editors receive more poetry in proportion to their needs, than any other work. But with all these discouragements, many new poets do get to the front continually, and the record of the last dozen years will show a brilliant group of young singers who have been enabled to win an audience to themselves by the aid of our magazines and other literary journals. What an editor wants in verse has been admirably stated in the following quatrain:

“Something sweet and tender,  
Something blithe and gay,  
That we all remember  
Till our dying day.”

Chas. A. Dana said, only a little before his death, that the interest in poetry is as great as it ever was. Publishers of books are certainly putting out as much good poetry as ever.

What the people will read, in the poets' column of the daily newspaper or in the first class magazine, is the pithy, bright, brief, adaptive song of labor and love, of hope and optimism, as long as there are poets to write and readers to read.

## CHAPTER XI

The Trade Journals—A Profitable Field—Qualifications of an Industrial Writer—How to Begin with Such Work—List of Industrial Journals that Buy Material—Correspondence for Trade Journals—Fashion and Commercial Work.

**W**RITING for the trade journals may be taken up either as a specialty to which a man may devote his entire time and talents, or as a side line to general literary work. To become a writer for trade journals presupposes some especial knowledge of mechanics, or of certain trades or handicrafts. As it would be folly for any writer, no matter how skilled in the technicalities of literary form and expression, to undertake to write for the agricultural press without at least a working knowledge of agriculture itself, so would it be the height of the ludicrous for one to attempt writing for a journal devoted to the paper trade without some practical knowledge of the manufacture of one or more classes of these goods, or of channels through which they find their way into use, and the ways in which they are employed.

This is necessarily a somewhat circumscribed field; but workers therein enjoy the offsetting advantage of having comparatively few competitors. The combination of practical knowledge of a manufacture or a handicraft, and of ability in literary expression, is sufficiently rare to make their possessor a marked man.

In industrial writing, that man will succeed best who knows one thing thoroughly. As we have elsewhere instanced, let a man know paint alone, as a man knoweth his brother, and his field will be wide indeed; it will comprise the entire list of journals devoted to the paint trade, the drug trade, house-building, interior decoration, the agricultural journals, etc. Even the daily newspapers will be open to him once in a while for practical articles upon paint and its uses. In addition, there are journals devoted to the carriage trades, to the manufacture of agricultural implements, architecture, etc., with all of which the thoroughly equipped writer may find place. A knowledge of paint presupposes a knowledge of all of the constituent elements of paint, of coloring matter,

dye stuffs, etc. This opens up the field of the dyers' trade journals, in which one may tell about logwood, cochineal insects, etc.

One who contemplates writing for trade journals should first seriously consider what especial line he possesses the greatest practical knowledge regarding. It is not well to attempt to be a jack-of-all-trades in this work, for then editors will be apt to discover that your knowledge of any one particular topic is a rather thin veneer. Throw yourself heart and soul into the study of one trade. Let that be the one concerning which you already know most, then add to this the knowledge that other men have accumulated. When you feel yourself thoroughly equipped, competent to make a beginning, consult a newspaper directory and get the names and addresses of all the periodicals in that particular line, and of others that you think may have occasional or regular place for such work. Then write a brief practical letter to the editor, tell him what you want to do, and as evidence of your ability to do it enclose a sample contribution (not too long). Ask him if he can use that, and request him to let you know what such contributions are worth. Editors of technical and class journals are not overwhelmed by competent writers as some other periodicals are, and hence are usually alert to discover the men who can do the things that they want done.

Get a copy, or better still a file of the journal to which you shall make your first offering, and study its scope, in order that you may judge its requirements. It is just as foolish, and just as much a waste of time and pains, to fire at random in this work as in any other.

The rates paid by trade journals are not usually high, but they are fairly liberal, and considering that rejections are much less frequent than from other journals, the rewards may be said to be very satisfactory. The average rate of payment may be placed at about \$3.00 per thousand words. Occasionally, twice this will be paid for material that is essentially new and valuable.

A partial list of trade journals, or of journals that use material in line with the suggestions above, is here given, from which it may be seen that the field is not a restricted one.

We also give the following as the ordinary rates paid by some of these, for contributed matter:—



- American Agriculturist, New York, \$3 per 1,000.  
 American Brewer, New York.  
 American Carpet and Upholstery Trade, Philadelphia.  
 American Cider Maker, New York.  
 American Grocer, New York.  
 American Miller, Chicago.  
 American Soap Journal and Perfume Gazette, Chicago.  
 American Soap Journal, Chicago, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Blacksmith and Wheelwright, New York.  
 Builder and Woodworker, New York.  
 Cultivator and Country Gentleman, Albany, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Decorator and Furnisher, New York, \$3.50 per 1,000.  
 Domestic Engineering, Chicago.  
 Drugs, Oil and Paints, Philadelphia, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Dyers' Trade Journal, Philadelphia, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Household, Boston, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Illustrated Carpenter and Builder, London, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Indian Rubber World, New York.  
 Metal Worker, New York.  
 National Wood Finisher, Dayton, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Oil, Paint and Varnish Trade, Chicago, \$3 to \$5 per 1,000.  
 Papermill and Wood Pulp News, New York.  
 Painting and Decorating, New York, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Painters' Magazine, New York, \$2.60 per 1,000.  
 Plumber and Decorator, London, 10s.6d per column.  
 Popular Science, New York, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Printer's Ink, New York.  
 Railway Master Mechanic, Chicago, \$3.50 per column.  
 Rural New Yorker, New York, \$3 per 1,000.  
 Shoe and Leather Facts, Philadelphia.  
 Textile World, Boston.  
 The China Decorator, New York.  
 The Spokesman, Cincinnati, \$3 per 1,000.  
 The Hub, New York, \$3 per column.  
 Tobacco Leaf, New York.  
 Varnish, Philadelphia, 30c per inch.  
 Western Painter, Chicago, \$3 per 1,000.

Doubtless all these figures are subject to variation, depending upon the material offered, but these are taken from the cash-book of a contributor, and show about what may be expected.

This list is not by any means complete, but it is sufficient to afford a suggestion of the many practical lines along which a writer may work. A careful study of several numbers of any journal to which one intends to offer contributions is earnestly recommended. It will be found that the majority of them do not confine themselves to a narrow range, but that every branch of the business

and the industries related to it are covered. For instance, a journal which deals with the manufacture of a vegetable product will not only use articles describing the processes of manufacture and improvements in same, but will deal with the culture of the crop, field conditions at various seasons, methods of handling and preparing for shipment, trade conditions, improved machinery for manufacturing, etc.

The trade journals always like to be informed regarding the starting up of new industries in their especial lines. But it should be borne in mind that all news and information sent to journals of this class must be verified. A false or sensational report might be of incalculable damage to the journal if printed, and the correspondent who sent it would be very certain to have no further standing with that editor.

Among trade journals it must not be forgotten that there are many which afford particular opportunity for the employment of the pens of the gentler sex. Among these are the fashion journals, which use an unlimited amount of material, and which as a rule pay contributors well. There is a particular reason why this field offers a wide market. Fashions change with startling rapidity and periodicity. In agriculture the same thing is to be done over in about the same way each year. With many trade journals the opportunity for doing new work is limited because it is not always possible to find new developments or phases of the work to write about. But in fashions the changing of styles continually opens the whole field anew.

To do the higher grades of work for these fashion journals and for the fashion departments of popular periodicals requires some special training. But for anyone who has facility in doing descriptive articles, and who is located in any large city, a start may perhaps be made by securing orders from out of town journals for letters describing the openings of large dry goods and millinery houses, and the new fabrics and styles shown. Sketches may accompany such articles, but these are not absolutely necessary.

Any new or striking style may be made the basis for an article, but the writer must herself be one who is thoroughly competent to discuss styles, and who is "up" regarding the latest caprices of fashion. New colors, new shapes, and changes in all articles of wearing apparel are of interest to the publisher, and to the reader of fashion notes. Keep in mind that the majority of

such readers, and those who give the closest attention to such descriptions, are people of moderate means. Therefore make your articles of as practical a nature as you can, and you will find them proportionately appreciated. Many journals realize that these letters are taken by their readers as a basis for home work, and so descriptions that are sufficiently clear to be used as guides are best liked by them. Among such work, practical notes on dress-making, on remodeling old garments, and on home millinery are always acceptable.

There are specialties within specialties. A fashion writer may devote herself to a single line: as, for instance, making a specialty of styles for children. Others take up house furnishing and decorative art as applied to the home, while others devote themselves to novel entertainments for social gatherings. Nearly all fashion journals use accurate descriptions of the latest fancy work, and toilet notes and "beauty talks" often command good prices.

Allied to this work are descriptions of historical costumes and historical sketches of the origin of certain fashions, or articles of dress. This widens the field of the fashion writer into the realm of literature proper.

The avenues for the sale include not only the fashion journals, but the various household and domestic publications, some of the syndicates, and many large newspapers which have a woman's department in one issue each week.

Often very much valuable and interesting material may be secured by cultivating certain lines of acquaintance judiciously. For instance, the intelligent head of the lace department of a large store could give many interesting facts regarding the delicate goods of which he has of course made an especial study for many years; or the rug buyer of a carpet house could make a most picturesque and informing narrative. They could give you information regarding the sources from which such goods are procured, the processes of manufacture, often much of peculiar interest regarding the conditions of life among the people who produce them, practical hints as to the values of different classes of these goods, how the real may be told from the imitation, etc.



## CHAPTER XII

The Humorist—Joke-writing as a Profession—An Important Branch of Literary Work—The Heights and Depths of Humorous Writing—The Publications that Use Humor—What They Want and What They Pay.

IT is perhaps a long cry from the poet and the trade journal writer to the writer of humorous skits, but in one not unimportant respect the poet and the humorist are certainly alike. Both the "sweet singer" and the "funny man" are born, not made. Spontaneous humor is a gift that must be inherent in one as is the gift of song. Like the latter, the humorous quality in one's mental organization will almost invariably be apparent early in life. The boy in this is father to the man. The wit of the school may quite possibly become the humorous paragrapher or the writer of comic verses.

Not always will the schoolboy humorist develop thus, but if we hark back from the developed humorist, we are very apt to find his embryo in the lad. Environment will have much to do with this development, as upon that largely rests the determination of the character. The grim responsibilities of life may be in such contrast to the care-free days of youth, that both the sense and the expression of humor become subdued.

But if the environment is favorable, the native sense of humor will be developed. The boy will either achieve a reputation as a wit and a ready after-dinner speaker, or, if his tastes turn toward literary pathways, he will be apt to give his talents to the service of those journals whose mission it is to cheer and brighten with humor the pathway of life. And the more jokes he makes—and puts down in ink or immortalizes in type—the more he will be able to make, and the better, brighter and more pointed will they become.

The more completely a man is equipped for work in any line, the better will he succeed. Joke-writing may not seem at first glance to be a very exalted branch of literary work. It would seem that anyone can do this provided he be equipped with the one necessary element—the sense of humor. Yet the greater the command of language, the greater the ability to express one's self

tersely and grammatically, and the better scholar and all-round encyclopedia of information one is, the greater are his chances for reaching the top of the ladder.

The "funny man" may be either a high or a low comedian. All sorts and conditions of fun are demanded by an omnivorous reading public. Few in any generation will reach the brilliant heights attained by Mark Twain and Stockton. Coupled with their inexhaustible fund of humor are the most liberal literary attainments. Aside from the humorous principle, their work is along the highest levels. Upon a somewhat less elevated plane we have Bill Nye, Bob Burdette and others of that class. The lower we come upon the rounds of the ladder of fame, as upon all others, the more companions will we find. At the top alone is there any danger that one will be lonesome.

In the next lower rank we find the parographers and writers of humorous skits. While these may be named by the dozens, there are after all only three or four who have done work so very good that their names have become universally known. But it is here that the greatest field and opportunity is for the beginner. Aside from the four or five humorous journals of established and national reputation, we have publications of many classes that use this sort of humorous matter. *Harper's Magazine* for a long time had a department devoted entirely to short jokes. This has now evolved into a department usually containing one commedietta of two or three pages. John Kendrick Bangs is the favorite writer of these, and his work may be fairly taken as an example of what is most acceptable in this line. Others of the high-class magazines have humorous departments, in which subtle and refined jokes, dainty persiflage and airy fancies expressed in short verse, find place.

The Sunday editions of the metropolitan papers usually contain one page given up to cartoons and humorous matter. For these, jokes that can be illustrated, and dialogues of two or three short paragraphs are chiefly wanted. This material is not of as refined a sort as that used for the magazines. There is more horseplay, more working over of old ideas, and a lower literary standard.

The lowest form of wit tolerated by any publication, is the pun. We would not advise beginners in this line of work to experiment with it, however, as editors are not often kindly disposed toward it. The pun, however, may sometimes be used to build upon, pro-

vided the would-be humorist has the insight and depth of mind to not undertake to make the pun itself the joke, but merely the basis for the joke.

Among the forms of humor which the would-be "funny man" may experiment with are the foibles and misdemeanors of fashionable society; the trials and adventures of the tipsy man; the sagacity of the tramp in avoiding labor; the absurdities of the colored brother; the mishaps of the countryman in the metropolis; the errors of foreigners, and the woes of authors who cannot sell their manuscripts. In the latter case it often happens that the "funny man" must make a virtue of necessity, and coin, through the medium of the humorous paragraph, his own sad experiences of untoward fates.

A rather curious market for humorous work, and one that perhaps would not be thought of by many, is found among the makers of popular patent medicines. These issue almanacs in which the virtues of their nostrums are sandwiched between jokes and anecdotes.

As to the compensation for humorous work, that, like the compensation for all other sorts of literature, varies so widely that it is almost impossible to establish an average or make any definite statement. In this, as in some other cases, the reputation of the writer counts for almost as much as that which is written. We might state, however, that for the best of the comic weeklies, such as *Judge*, *Puck* and *Life*, from one to three dollars are paid for jokes of only a couple of sentences. Short jokes bring more in proportion than long ones. A joke prolonged into several scenes may bring but a half more than the shorter ones. Suggestions for cartoons, especially for good ones during a heated political campaign, are paid for most liberally. This is particularly true if accompanied by even the roughest sort of a sketch which will convey the author's idea or conception of his subject. Short, very short, humorous stories are well paid for. Ten to fifteen dollars is not an unusual price for one of not more than 500 words. It must have point, however, and be clearly and concisely expressed. Some of the foreign humorous journals, such as *Le Journal Amusant* and *Fliegende Blatter*, contain excellent stuff which, when translated, is appreciated by both American editors and American readers.

In offering humorous work for publication it is well to observe



some system. Send in your jokes in batches of a half dozen or more at once. Typewrite each separately on a slip of paper, having your slips of uniform size. Have your name and address on each slip. Enclose a return stamped envelope. The editor then can select those which he cares to retain and send the others back to you without much trouble.

The great mass of the material used by our humorous journals is of an exceedingly light character—squibs, conversation jokes, verselets and such trifles. The great English humorous journal, *Punch*, built up its circulation and influence largely by means of an entirely different class of work—social, satirical or political serials—such as Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures, and *The Book of Snobs*.

If a professional humorist will work hard at his trade, as if he were a wood sawyer, confining himself to his desk until he has ground out a daily stint of ten or forty or fifty jokes per day, he may expect to receive an income that will put to blush some workers along more elevated lines. A competent, industrious, professional joker may earn from \$40 to \$80 per week. But to do this he must grind very steadily and keep in touch with pretty nearly all the journals of the country that use such matter.

The best illustrations of what editors of the humorous journals desire may be found by a perusal of their own columns. Further than this it is almost useless to offer suggestions. Yet to show how ideas come and take form, and result in the humorous paragraph having its being, we may offer the following:

The writer intent upon finding material for his morning's work at paragraphing, is passing through a street where some laborers are employed preparing some water mains. He hears the foreman order half the gang to come up out of the ditch, and aid those above to lower some pipe. Immediately an idea begins to crystallize. It may pass through various transitions and phases of existence, before it finally takes form. The final result may be something like this:

Boss: How many ab' yees are down there?

Voice from below: T'ree.

Boss: Half of yees lower yerselves up and help Moike wid de poipe.

Occasionally an overheard conversation will give a paragrapher exactly what he needs, and in just the form in which it can be

used to most advantage. The following appeared under a sketch in one of our leading comic journals, and the paragrapher actually heard it told at the expense of a lisping friend:

Mrs. Benther (at a suppressed scream in the adjoining room): What's the matter?

Cholly (who has great presence of mind in spite of his lisp): It wat'h a mouth and it fwightened Mith Hilda.

Mrs. Benther: I thought it had something to do with a mouth! Don't let it happen again, please.

This may not seem to the reader who analyzes it carefully as very brilliant wit, yet these two paragraphs had a commercial value of just \$3.50, and the time occupied in their composition was probably hardly worth taking into account.

One intent upon the business of paragraphing must cultivate the faculty of seeing the humor of a situation on an instant, and of having the imagination to supply the missing details. As we have said in the chapter on Short Story Writing, the true story is hardly ever the available one for publication. So the best anecdotes are those of things that *almost* happen. The funniest stories are those that partially occurred. It is the part of creative humor to supply the lacking elements, the missing details.

Timeliness in humorous work is an element no more to be lost sight of than in the work of the special writer. Let the paragraph but read pat with the topic of the hour, be that Bryan and 16 to 1, embalmed beef and our soldiers in Cuba, or Aguinaldo and his army of naked Pagal warriors, and its chances of acceptance are doubled. The political situation of the day or the hour, whatever it may be, is always a basis for catchy, effective paragraphs that are always in demand.

One may meet with discouragements from editors in this line of work, as in all others. But if one really intends to be a professional humorist or paragrapher, it will be well to have in mind the advice given by an old hand at the trade: "Keep 'em going, keep 'em going; they'll sell somewhere before the paper wears out."

Of late years the humorous magazines have seemed to lose ground, though there are still a number of high grade ones. The reason, we believe, is that the literary magazines have been gradually encroaching upon the field of humor. Note, for example, the "Walnuts and Wine" Department of *Lippincott's*, Philadelphia; the "In Lighter Vein" of *The Century*, New

York; the "Editor's Drawer" of *Harper's*, New York; the humorous columns of the household, agricultural and daily papers. To-day there is a greater field for humorous matter outside the strict "funny papers" than there is with them. The demand, as ever, is for terse, fresh jokes; little anecdotes or skits; graceful, airy verse with a point, etc. Good matter brings very excellent prices, and many is the poet who sings with a gay heart for the humorous papers merely because his most remunerative markets is with them.

Since the last edition of our book, trouble in the offices of one of the New York weeklies resulted in the formation of a new company, which promptly put out several magazines along the general lines of *Puck* and *Judge*. As the market stands at present, the list of humorous publications includes the following:

*Foolish Book, Fun Quarterly, Just Fun, Smiles*, etc., New York. These publications are under the management of a company composed of the former leading contributors and editors of *Judge*. The magazines rank with the best of their kind, and are in the market for illustrated and unillustrated humor.

*Judge*, New York: One of the old standard weeklies. Until the formation of the new company, this magazine, with the exception of *Puck*, had the field to itself.

*Life*, New York: A weekly along lines somewhat more delicate and refined than the other humorous papers. Good satire and keen wit appeals to its editors.

*Puck*, New York: Corresponds to *Judge* in all its essential features.



## CHAPTER XIII

The Agricultural Press—Good Training Ground for New Writers—Branches of work Allied to Agriculture—Practical Work at a Premium.

**T**HERE is no better field for the beginner in literature than with the agricultural press. The agricultural journals of our country are ably edited, are of a plain and practical nature, and the better ones among them have a scope that affords the writer opportunity to exercise his skill along a variety of lines.

At first thought one who may contemplate trying his fortune as a writer in this field will consider that the only work it is worth while to submit must be along agricultural lines, or pertaining to agriculture's related industries, horticulture, floriculture, etc. Yet a glance at some of our leading agricultural publications will show how far is this from the truth. In most of these journals are various departments, and the ground covered includes everything relating to the theory and practice of agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, the live-stock industries, the dairy, poultry, animal pets, out-of-door life, the home in its various departments, practical articles by and for the housewife, material to instruct and amuse the children, articles of information of every sort, anecdotes and bits of travel, etc., etc.

As an example of the best type of the agricultural journal, yet without wishing to make any invidious distinctions, we will briefly analyze *The American Agriculturist*. Although this reliable old publication is devoted especially to the dissemination of agricultural information, it properly may be called a magazine of general literature for the rural home. Its first interest, of course, is to maintain well the departments devoted to practical agriculture. The stock raiser, the fruit grower, the market gardener, the rancher of the wide plains, the New England hill farmer, the cotton planter and the sugar grower of the South, all find within its pages material of special application to their respective needs. Writers who journey about and who have some knowledge of agriculture, so that they are able to write intelligently regarding matters connected therewith which come under their observation, will often chance upon curious practices, special cultures, new

agricultural undertakings, etc., which are excellent material for this publication. Agricultural education and accounts of educational schools are matters to which it gives attention. Illustrated, descriptive articles, practical hints and suggestions, bits of information, whether of two lines' length or filling a column, meet with ready acceptance, and are paid for liberally and promptly.

*The American Agriculturist* issues five editions, each one of which is devoted to the especial needs and interests of a certain section of the country. One deals mainly with the agriculture of New England, another with the Central West, another with the Pacific Coast, etc. Some of the contributed articles are used in all these editions, while others which are applicable only to one section appear in the single edition to which especially adapted. With its wide field, it would be almost impossible to write anything at all applicable to the agriculture or to the rural homes of the United States which would not be in line with its needs.

Passing from its agricultural departments to those of more intimate connection with the fireside and the home, we find pages headed "Evening at Home," "Mothers and Daughters," and "Our Young Folks." In these are used short and continued stories, always of a thoroughly wholesome tone, and which appear to be specially acceptable if touching upon the better aspects of agricultural life. In these departments historical, biographical and descriptive short articles are also used, as well as articles upon matters of interest to the household, upon needle-work and other handicrafts that may be followed in the home, upon home culture, the care of children, etc.

In writing for the agricultural press, the first requisite is to have something practical to say; the second, to be able to say it plainly, tersely and grammatically. Fine writing, and great literary skill are not requisites.

Any manual containing classified lists of journals will show a large number of publications of this sort with which an author may work with pleasure and profit. But aside from strictly agricultural journals there are many others which use agricultural and related articles. Among these are some of the religious and household journals, and the weekly editions of some of the metropolitan dailies.

The very best suggestion that we can give an intending contributor to enable him to submit the sort of material that is needed,

is to quote from a personal letter written by the editor of *The Farm Journal*, Philadelphia. He says: "The best plan is to look over the paper, note the different department headings and furnish some bright, spicy, useful articles, about the same length as you see under these headings."

There is a great diversity among these publications as among those of any other class. Some demand short, pithy articles only, others will use long and exhaustive contributions upon special subjects. Some confine themselves closely to agricultural lines, others range over the entire field of literature. So that it is quite as necessary here as elsewhere, that a writer should be familiar with the journal to which he offers his wares.



## CHAPTER XIV

### → Choosing a Market.

**A** KNOWLEDGE of the right avenues in which to offer work is of so much importance that the fact cannot be too often reiterated. This is knowledge that comes in its most complete form from experience, and from experience alone.

The average young writer, or even the older writer, whose work has been confined within narrow limits, has but little idea of the vast range of the literary market. Ordinarily the young writer has in his mind's eye a few of the leading magazines only, when considering what journals shall be honored with the opportunity of accepting his productions.

We would never discourage a young writer from shooting at a shining mark, provided he has at all the right sort of ammunition. But the chances for acceptance with those publications are naturally of the slightest, as they receive such a vast amount of material in excess of their possible needs. They have continually also the first chance at the work of men and women whose ability in the literary field has already been proven, whose names are the warrant for good work, and whose work helps to sell the journal in which it is published.

After these shining lights among current publications come a large number of excellent magazines of somewhat less repute, which use good work, which pay fair prices, and whose pages are less given up to the work of master hands. With these is doubtless one of the best avenues for the young writer to prove what he can do.

We do not wish to be understood as meaning by the above that such magazines as *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *The Century*, *The Atlantic*, *Lippincott's*, *The Cosmopolitan*, or *McClure's* discriminate against the young writer. Editors of all these are men of ability and judgment, who are always on the lookout for the new writer who has something new to say. We know of more than one such who has made his first appearance before the reading public in their pages.

But directly in the class following these magazines we have many literary weeklies which use general literary miscellany; then a few religious papers and magazines which use miscellany of high character and pay good prices; juvenile journals, which use a wide range of contributions; household and domestic journals; class journals, among which are the trade papers; agricultural and society journals, scientific and popular-scientific publications—all good buyers when a writer knows just what is wanted and where to send it.

Following these comes perhaps the widest field of all, if not the best in point of compensation, and one that is neglected by many writers either because they do not know or do not appreciate its value—the daily newspaper. Perhaps it has not occurred to them that the modern daily newspaper does not differ very greatly in its general make-up from the modern magazine. We are speaking now of the newspapers of the higher class, not those which are popularly designated as “yellow journals.” The papers of this better class not only give us the news of the day, but their columns are open to everything which touches upon the literary and social life of the hour, to advancements in science, to new discoveries in every realm of nature, to travel, biography, anecdote, sociology, the short story, in fact everything which affords material for the writer’s pen.

Even in point of compensation, the newspaper as a literary market is not to be lightly regarded. Contrary to the impression of many writers, the rates paid by some of these journals are better than those of a great many other publications of higher literary pretensions. Newspaper space rates run from \$3.00 to \$10.00 per column, of about 1,500 words. While this is not extravagant payment, it is at least as good as that of some of the literary weeklies and smaller magazines. One who is producing a great deal of copy can hardly afford to ignore the newspaper field, as it is the only one that is practically unlimited.

The writer of this has a friend who is a well-known and somewhat voluminous contributor to the press, including both newspapers and magazines, and he has that rare ability that enables him to write well upon almost any subject that can be suggested. If he has any one point which disqualifies him from becoming a pre-eminently successful all-round writer, it is that he cannot always choose subjects in line with editorial requirements. Occa-

sionally the writer suggests topics to him, and these are immediately worked out and sent off. Recently commenting upon this, our friend said, "My subject book shows that articles upon topics suggested by you always sell, and almost always at the first intention."

The explanation of this is not difficult. The subjects suggested were always such as seemed to be in line with current topics of public interest. They had the element of timeliness, and so commended themselves at once to editors. Further, no theme was ever suggested unless a publication was in mind at the time which might fairly be thought to care for an article of that sort. Thus there was very little firing at random. It was not as though one had said to himself: "Here is a good topic. I will write an article upon it," and forthwith did so, without stopping to consider whether any publication would be apt to use matter of that sort. Good articles may wander about aimlessly and forever, unless they are directly suited to the needs of some certain journal. There is nothing more important for the writer to learn than this.



## CHAPTER XV

### The Typewriter.

**U**NDoubtedly the typewriter has its own sins to answer for. It has made possible a greater production of manuscripts than formerly, and has rendered it easy for many writers who are extremely ready in the use of words, but rather barren as to ideas, to deluge editors with masses of stuff that are only a burden to their desks. Still, it has been a great boon to these same editors in making easier their work of reading and passing upon manuscripts, as nearly everything is now put before them in so much plainer shape than formerly.

Writers may well call the typewriter their friend. To the majority of people continued labor with the pen is wearisome to the last degree. More than one writer has found that while the brain is yet fresh and active, the hand and the eye have tired of the constant strain to which the pen has subjected them. The typewriter has enabled writers to do their work more rapidly, more easily and in some ways more correctly than ever before. We believe it is true that the average man or woman can stand twice as many hours of work at the machine as with the pen. At least double the rapidity in the production of copy may be acquired, so that the ratio of production as between the machine and pen may be stated as four to one.

There is no doubt that a writer is able to put his sentences into better form by the aid of the machine, where each word, as soon as written, stands out more clearly before him, than with the pen. In this manner he criticises his own work as he goes along, and with the very slightest labor may recast a sentence, a paragraph or a page. Then, too, the use of the typewriter tends to make the operator more careful in his choice of words, in the form of his sentences, and in spelling and in punctuation. These defects are not so glaring in the script, but stand out with an accusing distinctness in the type copy.

Do not expect too much from the typewriter, for it is only mechanical. It cannot perform human functions, but it can bring

one's faults out in such a glaring manner that one will at once set about rectifying errors of which, without this light upon them, he would scarcely have believed himself capable.

The following extract clipped from a publication of large circulation shows in the plainest manner the comparative values of typewritten and penwritten manuscripts:

"It is singular, when the general use of the typewriter makes legibility cheap, that many aspirants for the emoluments of authorship continue to complete their creations in their own chirography, and send them in that shape to the publishers. If they only knew what delay, to say nothing harsher, was incurred by such a course, they would have their copy neatly typewritten before entrusting it to the mercy of the critics who are to judge it. The sight of hand-written copy makes the spleen of a publisher's reader rise as soon as he opens it. So the author already has a certain feeling of enmity against him before a word is read. Then the critic begins to wade through it, more intent upon ascertaining its poor qualities than upon discovering any real merit it may contain. Then he closes it with a bang and takes up a slip:—'Crude, ill-fashioned, poor taste and weak treatment. Plot involved and disconnected. Characters ill-formed and unstudied.' He pins this on it and sends it into the office, and the manuscript is returned to its author as unavailable. This, mind you, happens after the thing has been in the publisher's possession for weeks, because he won't examine a hand-written contribution until he has cleaned up all the typewritten stuff. Old authors are familiar with these tricks of the trade, and young ones should become acquainted with them, and remember that typewritten manuscript, where everything else is even, stands ten chances for acceptance against one for the other kind."

Yet it must not be thought that the mere fact that a manuscript is typewritten will commend it to editors. It has been found that much type copy prepared by incompetent persons, or by copyists who are accustomed to doing commercial work, comes from the machine in the worst possible form for the printer's use. The average copyist who has had no training in the preparation of literary material knows very little about punctuation, capitalization, or paragraphing—to say nothing of spelling and grammar. It may be expected that the author's original manuscript, being correct in these particulars, will be a sufficient guide to the copyist. But in the first place, all writers are not beyond criticism in these particulars, and second, all copyists do not follow copy.

It cannot be disputed by any one who is familiar with the inside of an editorial office of any importance, that type script is always the first read, and that pen scripts often suffer by being neglected until all the material needed has been accepted. Then there is nothing to do but to send the pen script back to its owner. No

matter how conscientious and impartial an editor may endeavor to be in the fulfillment of his duties, no matter how earnestly he may endeavor to discover the very best work among the whole, the typewritten manuscript will always be the favored one.

Entirely aside from the fact that typewritten manuscript is the one sort that all editors like to handle, the possession of a typewriter will prove an item of economy and profit to any one who makes a business of preparing material for the press. Composition by its aid is so much more rapid than is possible to the best penman that the gain alone in the quantity of output greatly increases one's earning power. The labor of writing a given number of pages upon the typewriter is wonderfully less than in doing the same work by hand. Further, the machine is an economizer both of paper and of postage. A sheet of paper  $8\frac{1}{2}$  x 11, double spaced and with proper margins, will contain about 325 words of copy. An ordinary bold hand would place about 125 to 150 words on the same sheet. If a good quality of linen paper is used, as should be, the saving in the cost of this is considerable, and the saving in postage is much more.

Another item worth considering is that a copy of one's work may be had upon the typewriter with very little extra trouble. By using a carbon sheet a second copy may be made, which for the author's purpose is quite as good as the first. It is not advisable to send carbon copies to editors, but it is a wise plan to keep a copy of all the work sent off, to guard against possible total loss of a valuable article.



## CHAPTER XVI

### Preparing Copy.

**I**T is important that your manuscript be correctly paragraphed. It is very annoying to an editor to be compelled to go over an entire manuscript line by line for no other purpose than to correct an author's omissions regarding its paragraphing. No general rule can be laid down in this matter. In writing conversations, the general rule is to have each new speaker begin with a new paragraph, and to let no conversational paragraph run beyond 125 or 150 words. Yet in a running conversation where the separate spoken portions are of but a few words each, some writers prefer to blend into one paragraph a number of these short sentences. This method, however, is not generally popular with editors.

While, as we have stated, no conversational paragraph should run beyond 100 or 150 words, the same rule can hardly be applied to descriptive matter or interludes. Yet a short paragraph is almost always preferred to a long one; and no paragraph should be permitted to run to the entire length of a printed page, as to do so gives the matter when in print a heavy appearance. A writer's own judgment, based upon observation as to the practice in our most carefully edited publications, is the only guide on which to rely.

Italics are very sparingly used by the most careful writers. It has been said, and properly, that each sentence should be so formed that it will emphasize itself at the proper points, if emphasis is needed. There is no reason why we should indicate by a special mark where emphasis is to be understood, any more than we should indicate irony, humor, etc. We have seen manuscripts so underlined that the printed page, if copy had been followed, would have been little more than a succession of italicized words, strung together by a few connecting words in Roman type. Such would of course be absurd in the printed page, and is no less absurd in the manuscript. Italics may be used for foreign words, and to indicate the titles of papers and magazines. But the professional writer will have little use for them beyond this.

Where numbers are used, many writers carelessly indicate them by figures without regard to any rule. Figures thrown heedlessly into one's copy give it a bad appearance, and careful editors will not let them appear on the printed page, except when in adherence to strict rules. Our own practice is to write out in words all numbers under one hundred. This custom will meet the approval of all editors.

Use no quotation marks, unless they are absolutely necessary, and they are not necessary unless a direct quotation is made. Some writers use them for the sake of emphasis, and copy in which they are so employed is a nuisance to editors.

## CHAPTER XVII

### → The Question of Timeliness.

**T**HERE are two distinct ways in which timeliness will apply to contributions offered for current publications. One is the timeliness which will apply to special days and seasons, such as the Christmas holidays, the Fourth of July, Washington's Birthday, etc. The other, the timeliness that will enable an editor to present to his readers material touching upon important events, while they are engaging the public attention. As an illustration of the latter, it may easily have been observed that during the late war editors of all sorts of publications took eagerly not only material that bore directly upon the war itself, but everything connected with war, and the movements of armies. Industrious writers ransacked both ancient and modern history to find how troops were equipped, and fed, and handled; how navies were built, what improvements had been made in engines of war, how fortifications had been and now are constructed, how prisoners of war were treated, in fact everything that pertained to hostilities between two nations.

As soon as the war was finished such material fell dead. Editors then could only be persuaded to use war material from the pens of men who had made themselves famous in the conflict, describing the important events in which they had part. Even war poems, that had been so marked a feature of our magazines and newspapers for months, could hardly be given away a week after the declaration of peace.

Of course any one who has material that is timely in its connection with public events will be wise enough to offer it for sale without the loss of a single day. But some writers never seem to learn just when to send out material that is timely in connection with special days and seasons. We have known writers of considerable experience who would send an article on Easter to an illustrated magazine late in February or early in March, or one upon Christmas to a syndicate the 15th of December.

Only some knowledge of how publications are made up and printed and issued will help one to arrive at the correct methods of



practice in these cases. An illustrated magazine is often on the press sixty days before it makes its appearance upon the news-stands. Or if not actually upon the press, the type has been set, the illustrations prepared, and the magazine is in process of make-up. At least a month prior to this, and often more, the material for the number has been selected, and the editor knows just what is to be used. Stories having a bearing upon a special season must be selected even in advance of this period and put away with the material that is to go into the Christmas or Easter number. Thus it may readily be seen that work submitted so late as the dates mentioned above can have no possible chance of acceptance.

Then comes the other question, how early or how much in advance of the time of publication may such seasonable work be offered? One editor has said, and this not entirely with the desire to be facetious, that the best time to offer a Christmas story is—the day after Christmas. There is a grain of truth in this, but we should rather prefer to offer the Christmas material in March or April. That is, if it is intended for the larger illustrated magazines. For the smaller magazines and syndicates, it may be offered as late as September or the 1st of October; and for the newspapers, up to within a week or two of the time of publication. However, in this latter case the work that comes in toward the end of the time limit will have a slighter chance for acceptance than that which is offered earlier. It rarely happens that an editor, after accepting all the material that he will need to make up an approaching special issue, will take on other material that must be held over until the following year. We have known this to be done, but it was only when the material was so very good that the editor could not afford the chance of its escaping him and falling into other hands. As a rule all editors desire fresh material, and not that which has been carried in their files from season to season.

It must be considered also that a manuscript is not always accepted by the first editor to whom offered. Rarer still is it, unless one possesses an overshadowing reputation, that a writer may send out a manuscript with a certainty that it will be thus accepted at the first intention. Consequently, with these seasonable articles time must be taken by the forelock, so that if a manuscript must make two or three or more journeys before arriving at the proper anchorage, it will have time to do so before the special season has passed. This is a point that should not be overlooked.

The following table of dates and topics, together with dates at which material should be offered, will be found worthy of a place on the desk of every writer :

Jan.	1, New Year's Day.	July to Sept.
Feb.	2, Ground Hog Day—Candlemas.	
"	12, Lincoln's Birthday.	
"	14, St. Valentine's Day.	Aug. to Oct.
"	15, <i>Maine</i> blown up.	
"	22, Washington's Birthday.	
March	4, Inauguration Day, [every four years.]	Sept. to Nov.
"	17, St. Patrick's Day.	
or		
April	— Easter.	Sept. to Nov.
"	1, All Fools' Day.	
"	13, Jefferson's Birthday.	
"	14, Lincoln's Assassination.	Oct. to Dec.
"	23, Shakespeare's Birthday.	
"	27, Grant's Birthday.	
May	1, May Day, Dewey's victory at Manila.	
"	24, Queen Victoria's Birthday.	Nov. to Jan.
"	30, Decoration or Memorial Day.	
June	— Graduates, Vacation, etc.	Dec. to Feb.
"	12, Flag Day.	
July	3, Schley's victory at Santiago.	Jan. to Mar.
"	4, Independence Day.	
Aug.	— Midsummer Day.	Feb. to Apr.
Sept.	— School.	
"	— First Monday, Labor Day.	Mar. to May.
"	10, Perry's Victory.	
Oct.	— Harvest, Fruit, etc.	
"	8-11, Great Chicago Fire.	Apr. to June.
"	31, Hallowe'en.	
Nov.	— Nuts, Turkeys, etc.	
"	— Last Thursday Thanksgiving Day.	May to July.
Dec.	16, Boston Tea Party.	June to Aug.
"	25, Christmas Day.	

To these may be added the principal Chinese and Jewish feast days of the year, or a few of other nationalities which are celebrated in our country by foreigners.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Syndicates.

**T**HE literary syndicate is an outgrowth of the great expansion of the metropolitan newspaper. It is a thing of comparatively recent years, the past decade having witnessed almost its entire development.

The newspaper has grown from a mere chronicle of local events and happenings into a compendium of all that takes place in the wide world. It has added to this the publication of fiction, it has sent travelers and explorers everywhere, correspondents with every army that has taken the field, and its representatives have been present at every great event in the civilized world.

Some discerning man discovered that it was a severe tax upon newspapers to have their own representatives everywhere, and that there was no reason why two or three or more journals, situated at widely separated points, should not combine for the gathering of expensive news. Then some one thought of taking it upon himself to gather this material and dispose of it to various papers. Finally, from the gathering of news, the syndicate man went to buying newspaper material of all sorts, including fiction, and selling it to as many journals as he could, for simultaneous publication. During recent years some of the leading authors both of England and America have found it to their advantage to sell the serial rights of their work to syndicates, who supplied it to newspapers throughout the English-speaking world. As a rule a syndicate limits its service to one paper in a city.

We now have American syndicates that handle everything that newspapers can use. Others devote themselves to special branches. One makes a specialty of short stories, 1,500 to 2,500 words, for which it pays about the price that would be paid by a good newspaper. It has been known to syndicate work bought in this manner to more than eighty journals, receiving from each one fair compensation, so that the total amount brought to it for a story was of course vastly in excess of the amount paid the author. Another syndicate devotes itself entirely to feature articles—articles that can be illustrated. Some of the syndicates supply their ma-



terial in the form of proof sheets, while others send out stereotyped plates ready for the press.

There is much to be said both for and against the syndicate, both from the standpoint of editors and writers. It might seem at first that editors would not be willing to pay a very liberal price for matter not exclusively their own. Yet by utilizing the services of the syndicate, they are saved much time and labor that would have to be given to handling and examining great amounts of manuscript in order to come at just what they want for themselves. The syndicate acts as a middleman, sorting out and rejecting the chaff and bringing to the attention of newspaper editors only that which seems best. The newspaper, in distinction from the magazine, is only a thing of the day and its field of circulation is limited. It is read to-day and to-morrow it exists not; and although the same material may appear in papers in adjacent cities, it will not come before the readers in both. Magazines thus duplicating material would neutralize the value and originality of each other, but not so with the newspapers.

From the author's standpoint the syndicate is not a good thing—unless one can sell to the syndicate. To a certain extent the syndicate cuts off the wider market which the newspapers might afford were it not for the syndicate. On the other hand, it pays a rather better price for material as a rule, and gives wide distribution to its material, so that the author and his work become known more widely afield than would be possible through the medium of any single journal. It is also true that some of the papers patronizing syndicates would not be buyers of original material.

## CHAPTER XIX

### The Ethics of Postage.

**A**NY package not exceeding four pounds in weight may be sent by mail. Manuscripts, whether typewritten or pen-written, are subject to the letter postage rate, two cents for each ounce or fraction thereof. It does not make any difference whether they are sealed or not; the Postoffice Department considers a manuscript the same as a letter.

While the full rate of postage must be paid, it does not matter to the government whether it is all paid at the beginning of the route, or whether a portion is paid by the receiver. So a four pound manuscript package, upon which the full postage would be \$1.28, may be sent from New York to San Francisco if one two cent stamp is affixed. But the man at the other end will have to pay \$1.26 before it will be delivered to him.

Right here is where some writers make a serious mistake. They either knowingly or carelessly put on less than the full amount of postage required, and trust to the editor or publisher to whom their manuscript is sent to make up the deficiency. Some of them will do this, some will not. There are publishing offices which make it a rule to accept from the post office no manuscript that is not fully prepaid. Other MSS. go to the Dead Letter Office, and from there notification is sent to the owner. If an editor takes from the office an underpaid package, making up the deficiency himself, he is already prejudiced against the sender. If, upon opening the package, he finds also that the sender has omitted to enclose return postage, the chances are that the manuscript will receive scant consideration.

This may seem but a little thing when one considers a single manuscript. But there are many offices in which so many underpaid manuscripts are received, that the thing becomes really burdensome. A writer should have enough respect for himself and enough confidence in his work to fully prepay it, and to send the entire amount needed to insure its safe return.

A manuscript of more than one pound weight may be sent to

X { points not too far distant by express, at a less charge than by mail. When sending an express package, it is best to notify the editor briefly by mail, giving the title of the manuscript and the express line by which forwarded. Be very certain also that your name is affixed to your manuscript.



## CHAPTER XX

### A Neglected Field.

**T**HERE is one branch of work largely in demand by certain journals of various classes, which seems to be overlooked by the majority of writers. We refer to editorials. It is the general impression that editorials of newspapers, magazines, weekly literary journals, trade publications, etc., are entirely the work of their editors. This is not always true. Of course the business of an editor is to write editorials, and this a great many of them do, supplying the entire material of this sort needed by their respective journals. Yet there are other publications that are alert to secure good articles bearing upon topics of the day, that may be used in the editorial columns. We have known a number of high-class weekly journals which make a specialty of clear and concise editorials dealing with the pertinent topics of the time, to use contributed articles in their editorial columns, and to invite the senders to supply other work of the same sort.

Of course it is understood that when a contributed article is used as an editorial the writer loses the credit. On the other hand, he usually receives a better rate of compensation than would be the case if the article were used elsewhere in the same journal. The writer some time ago found that an article submitted in the ordinary manner to a class publication of high rank was used in this manner, and taking the hint, he adapted much of his work upon current topics to such use; never offering it as an editorial, but preparing it in such manner that it could be so used almost absolutely without change. A fair proportion of such work was accepted and used in that manner, and the compensation received was invariably better than for other contributions to the same journals.

Some of the large daily papers are glad to have such contributions, as the editors are not always able to keep up with the demands made upon them for fresh and original treatment of the various topics that they must bring up for the consideration of their readers. An over-worked editor is sometimes only too glad

to avail himself of the assistance of an intelligent contributor who may relieve him once in a while from the drudgery of his daily task. What this daily task may be in a great newspaper office is shown by the recent statement of one of the older and abler journalists of our country, one who was for a long time editor-in-chief of a great metropolitan newspaper, to the effect that for twenty years he had been accustomed to write three columns of editorial matter each night between the hours of eleven and one o'clock.

A little observation will teach a writer what journals really use editorials, and what merely have some editorial comment upon matters and things. Perhaps the *New York Sun*, among newspapers, and *Collier's Weekly*, among literary weeklies, afford the best examples of original and trenchant editorial work, sustained in every issue throughout the year.

## CHAPTER XXI

### Articles of Information.

IT has been well said that to be a writer one need not be an author. In our current publications, there is room for a vast amount of material which could not by any stretch of the imagination entitle its writer to claim a place among authors. This is not said by way of belittling such work, but to show the immense opportunities for all who can write intelligently upon practical subjects. Articles of information are in demand by all classes of journals, from the newspaper and domestic monthly up to the leading magazines. These articles may be the result of study, of travel, and of research along many lines. These are the higher levels of articles of information, and are usually the product of those who make journalism a profession.

But there is another field to which we would call particular attention. That is the one which demands practical articles which are the result of experience upon matters of home life, child-training, the care of the health, culinary affairs, education, etc. Those most competent to write along these lines are housekeepers, mothers, teachers, who are careful observers and who have sufficient tact to choose wisely what to say, and who are acquainted with the ordinary rules which govern the acceptable preparation of manuscript. Such may not only receive a fair recompense for their work for the press, but may discover a medium for doing much good thereby.

Such articles will find the readiest acceptance with the many journals devoted to the home. They should not often be long. Papers of 200 to 500 words will be found more acceptable than those of greater length. Much literary skill is not needed in the preparation of these, but one should be able to give clear expression to facts and ideas, and to write good, terse, vigorous English. The agricultural journals use a great deal of such material, as do also the religious journals which have a household department. In the home, or woman's department of some of the larger metropolitan dailies, space is also given to such material in one issue each week—usually the Saturday or Sunday issue.



In preparing articles of this sort, we would suggest that writers observe what we have said in our chapter upon writing for trade journals. That is, that in practical work one may write best and succeed best by confining oneself to the topics regarding which he has the widest and most explicit knowledge.

## CHAPTER XXII

### The Literary Critic.

**T**HE part of the critic, as commonly accepted in literature, is to take the finished and printed work of the author, and to tell the public whether it is good or bad and to show why it is so.

But there is another view-point for the critic, and that is in his relations to the literary beginner. The beginner in literature, as the beginner in art, or in the sciences or the trades, is often chiefly remarkable for the things that he does not know about the profession upon which he has chosen to embark.

It is not uncommon for the young writer to think that because he has something to say he must necessarily know how to say it. But this does not always follow. If he wishes to get the ear of editors and through them reach the ear of the great public, he must conform to certain standards. Not only must he be grammatically correct and technically correct in other particulars, but he must avoid certain forms of expression, and the introduction of certain matter which is almost invariably the sign manual of the amateur. It is more the sins of commission than of omission of which the young writer must beware. The trouble usually is that he overdoes his matter, rather than the reverse. He is apt to be too verbose, too flowery, too redundant of speech. In such a case, if he can submit his work to one who understands the technique of his art, who can examine and criticise it from the standpoint of the editor, before it is submitted for editorial approval, he certainly should be the gainer.

In this connection we must warn the young writer that the criticism of friends is not to be depended upon. Nor is it always safe to trust, as some writers seem bent upon doing, to other and older writers for an opinion. It is a fact well known among editors that many able writers are wholly unable to judiciously criticise their own work. In them the editorial faculty appears to be wholly lacking, and they are not competent to pass judgment upon

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the work of themselves or of others. It is only after an author has occupied an editorial position that he can safely be depended upon to give to others criticism and advice which is wholly reliable. So if one can command the services of a competent professional critic, who will read his manuscript with no purpose but to determine and report upon its character and availability for publication, it will often be well to do so.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### The Value of Work.

**W**RITERS are made—not born. There may be some exceptions, which only prove the rule; but skill in composition, in literary technique, in concise and dramatic expression, is acquired—as all things else that are worth having are acquired—by application.

It matters little what direction your work may take, your first efforts will have a certain crudeness which you cannot be rid of by criticism, by the study of models, or by any aid outside yourself. True, criticism and advice may help, but only to direct you toward the paths in which you may do for yourself.

Longfellow was a poet from his youth. The poetic instinct was early and strongly developed in him, yet in his mature years he would have been glad to consign to oblivion much that his pen had given to the world before he had schooled himself by assiduous application, and so perfected his art. Guy de Maupassant, who became the master of the *feuilleton*, giving within a few years more than three hundred admirable short stories to the Parisian press, studied for seven years under an inexorable master, who destroyed daily that which had been written. At last, the pupil having perfected his method by unceasing practice, the master permitted him to print. Well would it be for many of us if our creations were thus destroyed by some keen-eyed critic, more alive to their defects than we can ever be to our own, yet seeing the promise of better things if we have but the courage and patience to work toward their accomplishment.

Practice perfects. We do not question this in any physical matter. No one pretends to perfection in any handicraft until a long apprenticeship has been served. The painter goes to school and learns, by patiently following the work of a master, all the details of his art, beginning with the mixing of his pigments. But the writer——

But the writer, you say, cannot always have a master. True. Then let each be his own preceptor. Write, and destroy, and write

again. Do not write the same thing, but take new ideas, new scenes, new characters, and clothe them with new literary form. Thus you will acquire facility and diversity.

A young story writer often fears that a time will come when his stories will all have been told. Sometimes he looks ahead and is perplexed that no more images arise upon the palimpsest of his brain, to be set forth upon the written page. This is most often so during a period when creative work has been suspended. I think all writers of fiction will agree with me that the longer these creative faculties have been in disuse, the stronger is this haunting fear. The writer questions if he will ever again be able to conjure up those fancies that once came so readily. I have seen facile writers of stories almost in despair at this thought. But when they were once more really at work, fancies would arise more thick and fast than ever. Perhaps there was difficulty in getting the fountain started again. Thought was sluggish, and the first story proved formless and unsatisfactory. But the next was better and more easily done, and the next, and the next, and the next, until they fairly tumbled over one another, so rapidly and eagerly did they press for utterance. The writing of a story may start a train of thought that will bring forth a dozen, as fast as they can be put upon paper. The more stories one writes, the more are conjured forward from the recesses of the brain where they have been hidden.

Thus, work develops the imagination. The writer who has his harness on steadily is never at a loss for "something to write about"; this plaint is the sign manual of the writer who has not yet learned the first lesson in his literary primer. If you must search and cudgel your brain for "something to write about" you may feel pretty certain that when the thing is done it will prove to have been not worth the doing. Real, earnest writers, who are thoroughly in the work, find their difficulty to be quite another sort; they have all the time so many topics pressing them that it troubles them to pick and choose which shall have first attention.

Now, when the thought-waves have been started by actual application to the task in hand, let them come as the water flows from a fountain that is overfull. Do not be afraid of writing too much;—you need fear only offering too much for publication. Write all that you can; then scrutinize closely, destroy the bad, and put aside that which you think good, until it may ripen.

Let there be no cessation in your work. It will be more difficult to get started again than to keep right on. Do not be afraid of an accumulation of manuscripts. A writer is hardly seriously in the field unless he has a half hundred manuscripts of various sorts ready for and seeking a market. X

The athlete makes himself still more strong by constant exercise. The pugilist trains and hardens himself for the conflict. The builder and the machinist toil to perfect themselves in the details of their work. The painter and the sculptor grow continually by the accomplishment of each successive task. Among all men, it seems that only the writer hopes to evolve out of his poor little egg-shell of a brain, at once, without practice, application, or training, something that the world shall think of value.

The earliest productions of a writer usually deserve the flames, —nothing more. Because editors return them as unavailable, only shows that editors have a modicum of worldly wisdom. And a writer who is discouraged by such refusal, and who is not willing to take it as a hint that he has yet somewhat to learn of an art in which the greatest of the world have striven, deserves only failure.

The art of literature is vast, all-reaching. Have you a message for men, now and for all time to come? Then is it not worth your while to learn to say it so that you may compel them to hear? X



## CHAPTER XXIV

### The Profession of Authorship.

THE press has recently had much to say about writers, and particularly about writers for the publications embraced in the classification "periodical literature," viz:—the monthlies and literary weeklies, and to which should now be added the Sunday editions of the great dailies.

The various articles published have mainly purported to give advice and information to beginners in the art of authorship, and to literary aspirants in general: and while some items have been given showing the financial compensation of certain writers, or the payment received for certain work, little has been told upon which the average income might be predicated, or the average return for accepted work be arrived at. Perhaps it is true that no average basis can be arrived at for these matters; yet information is available that may help to convey a more or less exact idea of the probabilities and possibilities—a more exact idea certainly than offered by any of the above articles that have come under my observation.

In this country now are some thousands of persons who are gaining—or trying to gain—a livelihood by writing. Among them are a few men and women of brilliant genius, and there are a few dolts. The success of the former is assured, and we will not concern about the exact amount of their incomes; they are at least enabled to keep the wolf from the door. The failure of the latter is equally sure, and consequently the public can have little interest in their ephemeral appearance in the literary arena.

After dismissing these extremes there yet remain a large number of honest, industrious workers, who have considerable intellect, if no great degree of genius. Upon these—the rank and file of the pen-wielders—the editors of our magazines and other periodicals depend mainly for the great bulk of the material that fills their columns. A few great names may be advertised in the prospectus, but an examination of the index will show that comparatively obscure writers have furnished the major portion of the contents. "Comparatively obscure" means that while their names may be

somewhat known in the purely literary world, and familiar in editorial rooms, they are as yet almost wholly unrecognized by the great mass of the reading public. Names that are wholly new to the cursory reader appear continually; and that brings me to the first question asked by the literary aspirant—"How shall I get in?"

A newspaper paragraph, said to have been inspired by a reader for a prominent magazine, has been going the rounds, stating that only a small portion of the manuscripts received by the leading periodicals are even examined, unless coming from some one who is already a contributor or whose name is well known. It is strange that such a statement should meet with any credence. A magazine following such methods would be largely cut off from new thought and new ideas.

A very practical refutation of this is found in the fact that new names are constantly appearing, and that the old ones do not appear with such frequency as to preponderate among the whole. If the miscellaneous offerings were not examined these new writers would not be discovered, nor their contributions become available for making up that infinite variety which the best periodicals aim to place before their readers with each recurring number.

In looking over my accounts I find that within three years from the time of offering my first manuscript I received pay from nearly thirty publications, the list embracing many of acknowledged standing and a few of the very highest class. Had there been any prejudice against the beginner in literature this of course would not have been possible. It shows rather that even the most unpromising offerings are eagerly scanned in the hope of finding something new and printable. And it may interest some to know that I never had a manuscript returned without having reason to believe that it had been read at least far enough to convince the editor that it would not meet his needs. I do not mean by this that I have ever laid puerile traps by which I might catch an editor in the dereliction of his duty.

I believe that letters of introduction are very rarely of any use, although I have never tried them for myself. But it was my fortune recently to make the acquaintance of a young man of fine education and wide experience of the world, a Harvard graduate and son of a foreign minister of note, who had been for two years knocking in vain at the doors of almost every editorial sanctum in the country. He had been backed (or handicapped) by an

appalling array of letters of introduction from leading statesmen and *litterateurs*, but had not succeeded in getting a single line published. This young man also confided to me that he was certain his manuscripts were often returned unread; for he had at times inadvertently (?) allowed certain pages to become fastened together by stray drops of mucilage, and other pages to become disarranged from their proper numerical order. I suggested that perhaps this was one reason why his work was returned, and advised him to be done with such devices, to throw away his letters, and begin anew solely upon his merits. The only way to "get in" is to offer material that editors want. If you have the goods and send them to the right shops, you will eventually succeed in selling them.

But after getting in—Does it Pay?

I know it is rather the fashion to sneer at one who avowedly writes for money, at one who makes the financial aspect of his work the first consideration. But in this, as in other employments, men will usually put forth their best efforts for the purpose of securing some tangible reward, and so *in hoc signo (\$) vinces*.

In discussing the question of remuneration I shall confine myself to the great body of writers who are not famous: those who write for periodicals, and send their MSS. wherever the chances seem best for finding a market. Not only is the matter of acceptance left to the discretion of the editor, but he is also the arbiter of the value of their work. And right here is where a large amount of misinformation obtains, and upon this misinformation is based the wildest estimate regarding a writer's income. One's friends learn that he has received a hundred or even two hundred dollars for a certain article or story. One or two weeks of steady application were required for its production, and from this is figured an income of \$100 per week, or a possible five thousand in a year. They do not know that the number of periodicals that pay one hundred dollars for a single article is extremely limited, and a new writer may be considered fortunate to sell even one of his productions at this price. Those not upon the inside, either as sender or recipient, would be surprised to see how great a part small checks play in making up the income of the average writer. Those ranging from five dollars to twenty dollars are much more frequent and vastly easier to obtain than those of larger denominations.



It may be considered rather a misfortune than otherwise for a writer to receive large compensation for his work at the outset of his career. In my own case it was distinctly a detriment. The first two manuscripts disposed of brought me one hundred dollars each. And it was some little time thereafter before I was thoroughly convinced that it was compatible with my literary dignity to accept much smaller sums for work that I believed equally good.

The variation in the rates of payment by different periodicals, for the same class of work, is confusing to a new writer. The manuscript which, if accepted, would bring a hundred dollars from one periodical may finally be disposed of for one-tenth that sum: and some publications of good standing and large circulation do not disdain to send even as little as five dollars for an article or story of good length—say 3,000 to 5,000 words—and of quality, to say the least, which is acceptable to them.

It may be disheartening to an ambitious writer to sell for so paltry a sum the brilliant figment of his brain, for which so much better payment was confidently expected when it was first sent abroad: but this is better than not to sell it at all.

But at such prices, does literature pay? Let us see.

Almost the best practical advice for writers that I have ever seen, is contained in Mr. Eugene Field's answer to one who asked what were the best aids to literary success: "A good stub pen, and eight hours of steady work every day," said the serious humorist. This rule means simply steady application. One cannot well write eight hours per day without turning off something of value. If he cannot accomplish something, the drudgery of it will soon prove so exasperating that the self-imposed task will be abandoned. If something salable is evolved each day, though it be small in itself, and a market is persistently sought, and found, the final outcome will be fairly remunerative. One reason why many who attempt it fail to make the business of authorship profitable, is that they neglect to make and to market these little things. The rondeau may seem almost too small to offer an editor, but it may be just what he needs to lighten a page, and he accepts it and sends you a check for a couple of dollars, and bears you gratefully in mind when you come again. The little adventure, the anecdote, or the singular coincidence that has come under your own observation may be written out in a little time, and may bring a check for four

or five dollars without interfering seriously with the more important tasks in hand. These matters, thrown in as an addition to the "regular grind," will help materially to supplement the income.

Now about the "regular grind." A writer who is at all prolific, who can keep his stub pen going eight hours per day, or even less, should be able to turn off four or five thousand words of copy. To keep this up he must be versatile, or at such a pace he will soon be out of material. But if he can write short stories, articles on current events, travel and descriptive sketches, etc., he should be able to maintain this rate of production. Yet, supposing him inclined to give more attention to quality than to quantity, then this amount may be condensed, refined, polished and rewritten, and result in two thousand or twenty-five hundred words of good material. Now that the "machine" has so largely taken the place of the stub pen, this amount of production should be possible for any writer. Taking even the lowest rates of payment, such a day's output cannot bring less than five dollars, if it brings anything at all, and one would have to cater to a very poor class of publications indeed, if it brought no more than this.

Consequently, even at the lowest rates, if one can sell his entire product, a fair income is assured to a steady writer. And probably most of those who follow the profession of literature, devote enough time and attention to the business end of the work to ensure a market finally for all or nearly all that they produce. One trouble is, that writers are not often steady workers. Either the elation of success or the despondency of failure will serve them as excuse for leaving their desks for a protracted period, until some new inspiration moves them to resume their labors.

Young writers are often cautioned against writing too much. If a man has his bread to earn he will probably turn off all the work of which he is capable and for which he thinks he can find a market, although much of it may be very poor, and such as he will wish to disclaim in after years. Notwithstanding this, a writer cannot write too much. The writing habit grows with that it feeds on: the more one writes, the more one can write.

There are other rewards for the literary worker, besides the purely financial one. Notwithstanding Mr. Field's eight hours per day, few writers habitually give more than five or six hours of the twenty-four to their desks. This permits more leisure, greater opportunity for rest, study, reading, recreation and social duties than

the majority of business or professional men can afford. Their work often being performed at home permits more intimate association with their own family circle. Not being tied to an office or business that demands constant attendance in one place, they are free to travel as fancy dictates, and the purse permits, and this travel enlarges their scope in their chosen profession.

If you are ready to work hard, and wait patiently, there is nothing to discourage you from entering upon the pursuit of literature.



## CHAPTER XXV

### The Writer of Travel.

OVER the hills and far away!

“I want a change of scene and outlook for a few months, and would like a position as traveling correspondent and contributor. Would be content, as a beginning, with traveling and living expenses, and a small salary. Can you put me in the way of gaining a position of this kind?”

The above is an extract from a letter recently at hand from a writer who has done much work in stories, and other departments of literary endeavor, but now wishes to broaden her field. We quote it, because it is a sample of the requests that come to us almost daily, and we have thought that a few words upon this subject might be appreciated by many of our readers.

All the world loves to travel, and the majority of the people who become able to gratify their pet ambitions do journey hither and thither over the earth. At a certain stage in their career most writers become possessed strongly with the desire to travel; they wish to write travel, and they believe, and rightly, that such broader knowledge as they may obtain by seeing how the other half of the world lives, will help them in many ways in their work. This is true. One who can travel, and who studies attentively and appropriates to himself the numberless things that present themselves to his observation, will gather a fund of information, and will find his field broadened most wonderfully. It would not be difficult to name a dozen writers who at the best were winning but small renown in limited fields, but who, having opportunities for travel, made their names known and their work appreciated by a wide circle.

So we acknowledge that the desire of our correspondent is a wise and legitimate one—but how shall it be gratified? Few writers have the means to travel broadly. It is expensive, and the risk is too great to be assumed individually, or at least they imagine so, and consequently look for some publication to back them with expenses “and a small salary.”

But it is quite as easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle as to secure this *desideratum*. Very nearly all publications

like good travel work,—but not well enough to employ a writer regarding whose powers in this particular line they know nothing. After one has done this work, and shown his adaptability for it, very good arrangements may easily be secured. But the thing that hundreds wish to know is, how can the start be made?

It is not really difficult to find the chance to show what you can do. Are you contributing with any frequency to any journal? No matter how small or insignificant it is, only so that it pays for what it uses. If you have such a connection, the editor will be glad to give you what aid he can, in your endeavor to broaden out. Do not take your map now and look for the farthest point upon the surface of the earth, and ask him to send you there—for he would not do it. But select the point nearest home, where there is anything worth writing about in a descriptive way. It will not cost you much to get there, and you must expect to go upon your own expense. Now having selected your point, and knowing what you will find there to write about, ask your friend, the editor, if he will use such an article, if you will go there and prepare it. The chances are that he will. Now make the most of this little entering wedge. Do the very best work that you are capable of, even if you know you will not more than pay expenses.

If it is acceptable, he will give you another chance, and next time you can go a little farther afield, and do more articles, with very little added expense. Perhaps you can find another paper that will take something from the same trip. Once in, as a travel writer, with any journal, the connection is more easily held than almost any other. As I have said, very many journals desire such material, and good material of this sort is not easily secured.

After a time, if you have developed an adaptability for good descriptive writing, foreign travel will beckon you. Now comes the culmination of your desires. These journals for which you have been working will give you a basis, an agreement to take a certain number of letters, at a given price. If these contracts will cover your expenses, you can safely start out. The other material that you will secure, and of which you know nothing in advance, will enable you to gain a footing with still other and better publications; and by the time you have written and sold all that you have gleaned, possibly you will be glad you were not under contract with any single paper.

The writer of this began to do travel work in the manner here

indicated, and not so very many years ago; and now would not care greatly to accept a commission from any single publication, as a half dozen are ready to take all the material of this sort that he will offer, whenever he desires to go afield, at prices that well repay the journeying.

The field of travel is one of the most enticing to which a writer can devote himself. It gives such great opportunities for increasing one's knowledge, for broadening his ideas, for procuring new material for fiction,—if that be within his compass. It affords change, a thing that writers need, in order to keep them physically up to the demands made upon their nervous energies. And, if successful, there are few branches of work that return a better financial reward.

The travel writer may properly take account of timeliness. In the winter the residents of the Northern States journey South, and Florida, the Gulf Coast, Mexico, Cuba, the Bermudas, etc., are localities of interest to those who remain at home. In the summer the north Atlantic sea coast, the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence, etc., are of equal interest, and the writer should be guided by these facts. The large newspapers in winter will devote considerable space to letters from the southern resorts, and in summer to the same material from the North. These letters may describe the scenery and different phases of life, together with notes upon the movements of people.

That places have been described once or many times is no bar to their utility for later comers. They may be written of from different view-points, and the individual treatment of different writers may fit the same topic exactly for the needs of different editors. Then, too, one writer may be able to discover something of interest that another writer has omitted; and there are so many places for the publication of such work that one need hardly be afraid to give his time and talents to a careful description of almost any place in the world, provided he will give equal time and care to finding the proper market when it is done.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### Song Words, and Hymn Writing.

CONSIDERING the important place occupied to-day by the song, it seems strange that in this country the department of literary work upon which it depends should be so little cultivated. In England the writing of song words has attained a high point of perfection. In Germany the development is probably not inferior. But here in America a composer is fortunate if he can obtain words which, so far from giving impetus to his imagination, do not positively trouble him to render acceptable at all. To seek all the reasons for this neglect would be beyond my present purpose. The field is remunerative—more so than for most other forms of verse, and the work is less exacting. It is probable, therefore, that no particular obstacle presents itself, but that our American *literati* have merely failed to turn their attention in this direction; and believing this, it seems that consideration of song words, their qualities and the methods of attaining these, may be of use.

The essential requirement in all song words is that they appeal strongly to the feelings. This they will do according as they employ the emotional qualities of style, or picturesqueness. Naturally these qualities are very nearly akin, and so may readily give place to each other. The natural inclination, too, is for the picturesque to pass into the emotional: for, in poetry, at least, no vivid image is likely to be presented that does not at once arouse some emotion: this, in poetry, is the chief object of the picturesque. Nevertheless, there are many songs in which the emotional predominates, and calls upon the picturesque only to occasionally reinforce it. Such songs are to be found more frequently in operas and kindred works, where the picturesque is mechanically provided for. The famous numbers "Hear Me, Norma," "Ernani, Involami," and "Salve Dimora," are of this kind. Indeed, when in the opera, such songs may forsake the picturesque entirely, and become pure expressions of feeling. But with the isolated song this is rare; and it is the isolated song that chiefly concerns us.

If we turn to existing song words, abundant illustration of the

above points will be found. Take, first, Sir Arthur Sullivan's song, "Let Me Dream Again," the words of which are by B. C. Stephenson. The first stanza and refrain are as follows:—

"The sun is setting and the hour is late.  
Once more I stand before the wicket gate.  
The bells are ringing out the dying day,  
The children singing on their homeward way,  
And he is whisp'ring words of sweet intent  
While I, half doubting, whisper a consent.

*Ref.*

Is this a dream? Then waking would be pain—  
Oh! do not wake me, let me dream again."

This is an excellent illustration of the picturesque leading into the emotional. As the scene, by deft descriptive touches, is made more vivid and complete, it gives place naturally to an expression of strong feeling. Such a song presents to the composer excellent opportunities for a well-rounded composition, and the form is therefore a favorite. To it belong most songs with a refrain, such as "Maid of the Mill," "Blue Alsatian Mountains," and "Anchored." Many songs too that have no formal refrain, but simply lead at the close of each stanza or at the close of the whole to an emotional climax, are to be classified here; as, for instance, the popular song "Answer."

For a song with more of the picturesque and less of the emotional, let us now consider one of the best of later songs, "Daddy," written by Mary Mark Lemon, composed by A. H. Behrend. Here is the first stanza:—

"Take my head on your shoulder, Daddy,  
Turn your face to the west.  
It is just the hour when the sky turns gold,  
The hour that mother loves best.  
The day has been long without you, Daddy,  
You've been such a while away,  
And now you're as tir'd of your work, Daddy,  
As I am tired of my play."

Then comes the refrain (which is altered in language, but not in spirit, for each stanza)—

"But I've got you, and you've got me,  
So ev'rything seems right.  
I wonder if mother is thinking of us,  
Because it's my birthday night."

Pure painting is this, disguised though it be. Each word, as it falls from the lips of a singer, suggests an image, adds a picturesque detail. The childish voice rambles on,—wonders at the father's tears, wonders whether, when they go to heaven, the mother there will know them; but we are hardly conscious of what it says. Somehow it all but serves to strengthen the picture—that picture of lonely affection, disappointed hopes, uncomplaining sorrow, at which we gaze with dimmed eyes. That is what we are gaining from the song; that, and nothing else. But so well do we gain it that at the close of the last stanza we find that "Daddy" and the child are not any longer for us the creations of a song, but have taken fair place with the realities of our lives.

A song illustrating as well, perhaps, the predominance of the emotional as any song not from an opera will do, is "Take Back the Heart," by "Claribel." We give an amount that makes one stanza in music, there being two such:—

"Take back the heart that thou gavest.  
What is my anguish to thee?  
Take back the freedom thou cravest,  
Leaving the fetters to me.

"Take back the vows thou hast spoken.  
Fling them aside and be free.  
Smile o'er each pitiful token,  
Leaving the sorrow for me.

"Drink deep of life's fond illusion.  
Gaze on the storm-cloud and flee  
Swiftly thro' strife and confusion,  
Leaving the burden to me."

Here the first stanza is purely emotional, even the figure in the fourth line being used in too abstract a way to be picturesque, while yet full of feeling. In the second stanza, however, the line, "Smile o'er each pitiful token," is distinctly picturesque, and is good. In the last stanza, "Gaze on the storm-cloud and flee," is, like the first figure, too abstract to call any very distinct image to our minds; and it is further out of harmony with what has preceded, and in its elaboration in the succeeding two lines has a tendency to give the whole stanza the somewhat ludicrous sound of petulant complaint.

Before ending the quotations we will give one where the picturesque is employed toward a different end from the above. The song instanced is "The Owl," written by T. E. Weatherly, probably



the best of English writers of song words. The music is by Stephen Adams. We give the words entire:

“There pass’d a man by an old oak tree.  
 ‘To-who!’ said the owl, ‘to-who!’  
 His hair was wild, and his gait was free.  
 ‘He must be a lover,’ said the owl in the tree.  
 ‘To-who, to-who, to-who.’  
 ‘Whither away?’ said the owl as he passed.  
 ‘Whither away, fair sir, so fast?’  
 ‘I go,’ quoth he, ‘a maid to woo,  
 A maiden young and fair and true.’  
 ‘To woo?’ said the owl, ‘to woo?’  
 ‘Is anybody true in the world? To-who!’  
 ‘Ha, ha,’ laughed the lover, as away he sped,  
 ‘That’s just like an owl,’ he said,  
 ‘That’s very like an owl,’ he said.

“There pass’d a man by an old oak tree,  
 ‘To-who!’ said the owl, ‘to-who!’  
 His face was as long as long could be.  
 ‘He must be married,’ said the owl in the tree.  
 ‘To-who, to-who, to-who.’  
 His gait was neither slow nor fast.  
 He shook his fist at the owl as he pass’d.  
 ‘Oh! oh!’ said the owl, ‘it’s you! it’s you!  
 And haven’t you been the maid to woo?’  
 ‘To woo?’ said the man, ‘to woo?’  
 There’s nobody fair or young or true.’  
 ‘Ho, ho,’ laughed the owl, as he went to bed,  
 ‘That’s just like a man,’ he said,  
 ‘That’s very like a man,’ he said.”

While this is a very clever bit of humor, the type will not, perhaps, compel so much attention as others, for the reason that it is well fitted only for “encore” work, or in double numbers, and therefore does not ever create a large demand. The type is nevertheless a wholesome antidote to sickly sentimentality, and deserves to be cultivated.

In concluding, a few words of practical bearing may be acceptable. The writer who wishes to turn his attention to song words would better begin by studying a wide range of songs. The quotations given cover the more common types. But there are many more, which are exemplified by “Bedouin Love Song,” by Bayard Taylor, “Queen of the Earth,” “King Davy,” “Across the Bridge,” “Calvary,” and others. These are all of different character; yet in

all the merit depends, as we have seen, upon the picturesque and emotional force of the language. No rules can create a talent for these; but talent might be directed by observing the following:—

- ✓ Outline the scene at the very beginning.
- ✓ Choose only salient points for description.
- ✓ Make the movement rapid.
- ✓ Do not appeal to reason or reflection, but to feeling and imagination, and as aids to this,—
  - ✓ Be objective and concrete, not subjective and abstract;
  - ✓ *Avoid similes* except for a sparing use of those that are very short and simple, and have picturesque or emotional force; and
  - ✓ Be brief with metaphors, besides making them picturesque and emotional.

Finally, let me observe in confirmation of the last four rules, that almost all of the “words for music” that the greater poets have given us are ludicrously unfit for the purpose because of the exercise of the reasoning faculties that they compel; to illustrate this we close by requesting the reader to examine the following “Stanzas for Music,” by Lord Byron, referring the lines back to the rules mentioned (particularly the second stanza to the last rule) and imagining, if he can, the effect of the stanzas in the mouth of a singer:—

“There’s not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,  
 When the *glow of early thought* declines in *feeling’s* dull decay;  
 Tis not on *youth’s smooth cheek* the blush alone, which fades so fast,  
 But the tender bloom of *heart* is gone, ere youth itself is passed.

“Then the few whose spirits *float above the wreck* of happiness  
 Are *driven over the shoals of guilt or ocean* of excess;  
 The *magnet of their course* is gone, or only *points in vain*  
 The *shore* to which their *shiver’d sails* shall never stretch again.

“Oh! could I feel as I have felt, or be what I have been,  
 Or weep, as I could once have wept, o’er many a vanish’d scene;  
 As *springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish though they be,*  
 So ‘midst the *wither’d waste of life,* those tears would flow to me.”

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Literary work in most of its various departments has been freely discussed, but very little has been published about hymn writing.

While many inferior hymns have appeared before the public, these have generally received just condemnation.

The best music writers of the day are constantly trying to raise

the standard of gospel hymns by paying for good work, even though they are flooded by gratuitous contributions of a doubtful quality.

In hymn writing, even more than in writing poetry, care should be given to rhythm, and the science of lyrical verse. One cannot make a hymn by stringing a lot of religious phrases together, but must have a definite thought to express. Having decided upon a subject, next find a meter. If a verse has already formed in your mind, prove its correctness by singing it to some reliable tune. If the subject is of a solemn nature, select a meter of like import; if glad or gay, or inspiring, select a corresponding movement to be your guide in writing the hymn.

Be careful that two syllables are not crowded into the space designed for one; and see that the accented words or syllables are placed where they belong—on the accented notes of the measure.

This method has proved a great help to many writers, but the hymn must be carefully sung and corrected before it is submitted, as faults of accent or syllabication will condemn it in the eyes of any good composer.

The flippant, familiar way in which some writers have used sacred Bible truths, is greatly to be deplored. It lowers the work and has raised a just prejudice against gospel hymns, some churches completely discarding them, using for all their services the regular Church Hymnal.

Opening a book at random, we read:—

“I’m kneeling at the mercy seat  
Where Jesus answers prayer.  
I feel the blood, it’s coming now,  
I know I’m almost *there*.”

*Where?* Evidently the last line is used only to fill up, and rhyme with the word “prayer.” The third line is an irreverent allusion to the shedding of Christ’s blood on Calvary, and is wholly inexcusable as the words have neither sense nor reason. How often we are hurled from the sublime to the ridiculous by some thoughtless phrase, or irreverent simile. One should criticise his own hymns and revise every doubtful or awkward sentence, cut out superfluous words, stick to the theme, and see that every line is pure and reverent.



## CHAPTER XXVII

Don't's for Writers.

**D**ON'T fail to remember:

That editors hate cringing letters.

That your manuscript, if accepted, will be on its own merits, not on yours.

That you must never get discouraged because your manuscripts come back. X

That an author is no judge of his own work. |

That success comes only through perseverance. |

Don't send a pen-written manuscript to any editor if you want it read promptly and carefully.

Don't send any manuscript without stamps for its return.

Don't paste the stamps on your manuscript (nor to your letter) so that they must be torn off. | X

Don't omit to put your name and address at the top of the first sheet. It is a good plan to put it also at the bottom of the last one. | X

Don't send an editor a dozen other manuscripts the minute he has accepted your first one. He may wish to take something from other contributors. |

Don't put stamps loose in an envelope. They are apt to drift into the waste basket. | X

Don't send stamps at all, if you can possibly send a return envelope with the stamps already affixed. |

Don't fancy that editors are prejudiced against you.

Don't wrong the editor by thinking that the stuff in the latest number of his magazine is not half so good as yours which he returned.

Don't send an editor a long list of the work that you have published and expect him to be influenced by it to accept the manuscript submitted. |

Don't tell him that he can have your work for nothing. He will reason that the laborer is worthy of his hire.

Don't write long letters to editors.

Don't fasten the sheets of your manuscript to one another with clamp, thread or ribbon. Page the sheets plainly at the top, and |

leave them so loose that an editor may shuffle them like a pack of cards.

Don't re-write a rejected manuscript and return it to the editor asking consideration again.

Don't send a lot of newspaper clippings about yourself and your work, and expect to have them returned. Editors are deluged with that sort of thing; and it is troublesome to keep track of the clippings; and if they are not returned, the editor is probably bothered by a request for them weeks after they have passed beyond his possible knowledge.

## IN THE LITERARY MARKET

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

I DO not like to write about writing. In the first place, it does not seem to me that one person can tell another how to write. Furthermore, I cannot help feeling that I should very much prefer that somebody who knows the secret, or the receipt, should tell it to me. To me writing has been hard work. The selling has been harder, of course, but the writing has been hard enough. It is hard work at this minute. I have begun this article five times.

I do not mean to convey that I find writing drudgery. If I found it so, I should give it up, and go into something where discouragements were fewer and returns more abundant. I only mean to say that I do not often dash off masterpieces at a white heat, and then live for a month or a year in luxurious ease from the price received. I cannot recall now any instance of this kind, and I think I should have remembered it had there been one.

There are two sides to this writing industry—the writer's and the editor's. Having been on both, and with about equal discomfort, perhaps I may be able to offer a suggestion or two in this matter of how to sell, which seems to me almost as important as how to write.

In the first place, a manuscript should be well prepared. It should be typewritten, and it should be clean. Editors are only human—the more human they are the better editors they make—better for the writer as well as for the reader. Being human, an editor becomes tired; oh, very tired, when he has waded through piles and piles of manuscript, day after day, and week after week. Is it any wonder, then, that even a good story may sometimes slip by because it is illegibly written, or even when typed, is so soiled and battered that he is willing to take it for granted that it has been read and re-read by men quite as capable of judging its merits as himself? Now it may happen that this very story and the very editor belong together, and had the copy been legible or clean and inviting, it might have found its place and made the author and the editor equally happy. You are not taking an unfair advantage of an editor when you renovate your much-



traveled manuscript, or re-copy it on clean paper. You are taking an unfair advantage of your manuscript when you do not do it, and you are insulting the editor, who does not care where your story or article or poem has been, so long as it is presented to him invitingly.

Now in regard to sending your manuscript. Put it into a stout envelope and address it to the "Editor" of the publication without giving his name. In my experience, the only manuscripts that have been lost are those that have been sent to the editor in person, or to some member of the staff. It often happens that the editor, or the attaché, is out of the city when such mail is received. It is forwarded to him, and may travel about from place to place before it reaches him. When it does find him, he may be busy trout fishing, with no time, just then, to examine it. It is put aside for future reading, and a manuscript once put aside is in grave danger. It is dollars to doughnuts that neither the editor nor the author will see it again for a year. You see, the editor is only human, just as I said.

I am aware that there is a tradition that in the regular routine many good manuscripts never get to the editor at all. Well, this may be true. The manuscripts may be good enough, but they are not good for the particular publication to which they are offered. The literary reader of a magazine is not selected at haphazard. He holds his position because of his peculiar fitness for that particular place.

The fact that he remains there from year to year would seem the best proof that his publishers and his superiors are satisfied. If he turns your manuscript down, he does not do it because he does not recognize its value, nor because he is your personal enemy, but because he knows by long experience that he would only be delaying the verdict and taking his chief's valuable time by passing it along. I believe I have a personal acquaintance with almost every reader and editor in New York City, and know something of the relations existing between them. This being the case, when I have a manuscript to offer, I offer it in the usual way, without even an accompanying note, unless it is something timely, requiring immediate decision. Nor has my acquaintance the slightest influence upon its fortunes. Indeed, I sometimes think that my warmest editorial friends have taken the keenest pleasure in turning me down. They might, perhaps, have had some delicacy in the matter, had I been a stranger. As it is, they have not hesi-

tated to tell me that a certain poem or story was "pretty bad stuff," and that I would better go back and do something like I did last year, or last month, or at some other unseasonable portion of the dead and dusty past.

I may say further in this connection that nine-tenths of the literary discoveries have been made among manuscripts that were heaped on the reader's desk with nothing to indicate the special value of any particular one. I recall at this moment the name of a young woman whose work to-day is more sought after, perhaps, than that of any other young writer. I first read her name at the end of a very neatly typewritten manuscript, over which I had laughed and cried and rejoiced without knowing or caring who wrote it. When I got to the name, at last, it was entirely new, but it took no prophet to assert that it would not remain so. Such a find as that brightens a whole office for a week. It is like striking a nugget after a long, tiresome dig. And yet the tradition declares that manuscripts are not fairly considered. Possibly there are places where this is true, but I have never found them.

Now about the writer's side. Of course, the struggle is hard. The story which seems good when it is written, and may be good in reality, comes back again and again. But there are always good reasons for it. Perhaps it is old in theme. Perhaps it is entirely out of line with the policy of the higher class of publications. Perhaps the editor has more stories of that length and character than he can handle within the next two or three years. Perhaps your idea is better than your story. For instance:

I once offered to *The Century* a story over which I had grown rather enthusiastic. A few days later I met Mr. Gilder.

"That is a good idea of yours," he said. "It ought to make a better story."

"But don't you think it is a good story?" I asked, rather crest-fallen.

"Well, it is a pretty good story," he admitted, "but nothing like as good as the idea."

I took the manuscript home and flung it into my desk. It was six months before I looked at it again. When I did, I began to see faults. Then I began to want to correct them. Presently I did make some changes. Then I re-wrote the whole story. A week later I had a very satisfactory check for it. The story appeared in *The Century* for February, 1902.

You see, we sometimes mistake our enthusiasm for literary

value. This makes the game a hard one—enthusiasm is such a difficult quantity to deal with. The editor, as well as the writer, finds this to be true. He forgets sometimes that he is there to produce a certain type of publication, and allows his personal enjoyment of a story or a poem to convince him for the moment that it is just the thing he wants, only to realize when he wakes up that the accepted manuscript is just the thing he doesn't want, and can't print, unless it is revised, remodeled, and forever ruined. And this makes it hard, too. Hard for the editor—doubly hard for the writer. I have had this thing happen to me, both ways.

Writing, good, conscientious writing, is hard work. Editing, good, conscientious editing, is hard, too. I have never known an editor who did not regard with envy the writer who was able to live with any degree of comfort by his pen, with hours that were all his own, with no manuscripts but his own to read.

"You have an easy time, Munk," said an editor one day to R. K. Munkittrick. "You write half a dozen poems in the morning and sell them during the afternoon. You fellows have all the best of it."

Munkittrick looked at him in his artless way.

"Well," he said, "if you think it's easy, suppose you write a half-dozen poems to-morrow forenoon, and go out after luncheon and try to sell them. Your enthusiasm will cool off like a buckwheat cake, and like the buckwheat cake, once cool it will remain so."

And yet to-day R. K. Munkittrick himself, now editor of *Judge*, recalls with fondness the old days of freedom and enthusiasm grown cold.

The secret of success in writing is sincerity and perseverance. Given these, the manner of expression will come of its own accord. The man or woman with an idea and a command of simple Anglo-Saxon words and sentences will win, with industry and persistent effort. The story, or the article, or the poem, may come back again and again. The author may re-write it over and over, but if he perseveres, and the offering is genuine, it will find its place and welcome at last. I have had stories and poems returned to me as many as fifteen times, only to place them at last in a better market than I had hoped for in the beginning. The author who gives up after one rejection, or two, or ten, is unworthy of the name.

There is no royal road to authorship. It is fight, fight, and keep on fighting to the end. And this is as it should be. Art is



worth nothing without the fight to win, without the willingness to die fighting. He who by some stroke of fortune reaches a point where fighting is unnecessary soon drops out of the race. To give up never, to confess discouragement never, to do and keep doing, and struggling, and battling against all obstacles; to die in the harness, poor and pushed aside, yet fighting to the last—this is the royal road. And to believe that it is a royal road, the only road worth living and traveling and dying in, is the God-given joy that makes it all worth while. I know many, oh, very many, who travel this road, and I know not one of them all who would change.



## GETTING INTO PRINT

BY JACK LONDON

AS soon as a fellow sells two or three things to the magazines, or successfully inveigles some publisher into bringing out a book, his friends all ask him how he managed to do it. So it is fair to conclude that the placing of books and of stories with the magazines is a highly interesting performance.

I know it was highly interesting to me; vitally interesting, I may say. I used to run through endless magazines and newspapers, wondering all the time how the writers of all that stuff managed to place it. To show that the possession of this knowledge was vitally important to me, let me state that I had many liabilities and no assets, no income, several mouths to feed, and for landlady a poor widow woman whose imperative necessities demanded that I should pay my rent with some degree of regularity. This was my economic situation when I buckled on the harness and went up against the magazines.

Further, and to the point, I knew positively nothing about it. I lived in California, far from the great publishing centers. I did not know what an editor looked like. I did not know a soul who had ever published anything; nor yet again, a soul, with the exception of my own, who had ever tried to write anything, much less tried to publish it. Still worse, and to show how badly off I really was, I did not know "1001 Places to Sell Manuscripts," nor THE EDITOR.

I had no one to give me tips, no one's experience to profit by. So I sat down and wrote in order to get an experience of my own. I wrote everything—short stories, articles, anecdotes, jokes, essays, sonnets, ballads, vilanelles, triolets, songs, light plays in iambic tetrameter, and heavy tragedies in blank verse. These various creations I stuck into envelopes, enclosed return postage, and dropped into the mail. Oh, I was prolific. Day by day my manuscripts mounted up, till the problem of finding stamps for them became as great as that of making life livable for my widow landlady.

All my manuscripts came back. They continued to come back. The process seemed like the working of soulless machine. I dropped the manuscript into the mail box. After the lapse of a certain approximate length of time, the manuscript was brought back to me by the postman. Accompanying it was a stereotyped rejection slip. A part of the machine, some cunning arrangement of cogs and cranks at the other end (it could not have been a living, breathing man with blood in his veins), had transferred the manuscript to another envelope, taken the stamps from the inside and pasted them outside, and added the rejection slip.

This went on for some months. I was still in the dark. I had not yet gained the smallest particle of experience. Concerning which was the more marketable, poetry or prose, jokes or sonnets, short stories or essays, I knew no more than when I began. I had vague ideas, however, dim and hazy ideas to the effect that a minimum rate of ten dollars a thousand words was paid; that if I only published two or three things the editors would clamor for my wares; that a manuscript held in some editor's hands for the small matter of four or five months did not necessarily mean a manuscript that was sold.

Concerning this minimum rate of ten dollars a thousand words, a thing in which I fondly believed, I must confess that I had gleaned it from some Sunday supplement. Likewise I must confess the beautiful and touching modesty with which I aspired. Let other men, thought I, receive the maximum rate, whatever marvelous sum it may be. As for myself, I shall always be content to receive the minimum rate. And, once I get started, I shall do no more than three thousand words a day, five days only in the week. This will give me plenty of recreation, while I shall be earning six hundred dollars a month without overstocking the market.

As I say, the machine worked on for several months, and then, one morning, the postman brought me a letter, mark you, a letter, not a long thick one but a short thin one, and from a magazine. My stamp problem and my landlady problem were pressing me cruelly, and this short, thin letter from a magazine would of a certainty solve both problems in short order.

I could not open the letter right away. It seemed a sacred thing. It contained the written words of an editor. The magazine he represented I imagined ranked in the first class. I knew it held a four-thousand-word story of mine. What will it be? I

asked. The minimum rate, I answered, modest as ever; forty dollars of course. Having thus guarded myself against any possible kind of disappointment, I opened the letter and read what I thought would be blazed in letters of fire on my memory for all time. Alas! the years are few, yet I have forgotten. But the gist of the letter was coldly to the effect that my story was available, that they would print it in the next number, and that they would pay me for it the sum of five dollars.

Five dollars! A dollar and a quarter a thousand! That I did not die right there and then convinces me that I am possessed of a singular ruggedness of soul which will permit me to survive and ultimately qualify for the oldest inhabitant.

Five dollars! When? The editor did not state. I didn't have even a stamp with which to convey my acceptance or rejection of his offer. Just then the landlady's little girl knocked at the back door. Both problems were clamoring more compellingly than ever for solution. It was plain there was no such thing as a minimum rate. Nothing remained but to get out and shovel coal. I had done it before and earned more money at it. I resolved to do it again; and I certainly should have, had it not been for *The Black Cat*.

Yes, *The Black Cat*. The postman brought me an offer from it of forty dollars for a four-thousand-word story, which same was more lengthy than strengthly, if I would grant permission to cut it down half. This was equivalent to a twenty-dollar rate. Grant permission? I told them they could cut it down two-halves if they'd only send the money along, which they did, by return mail. As for the five dollars previously mentioned, I finally received it, after publication and a great deal of embarrassment and trouble.

I forgot my coal-shoveling resolution and continued to whang away at the typewriter—"to drip adjectives from the ends of my fingers," as some young woman has picturesquely phrased it. About this time, I do not remember how, I blundered upon THE EDITOR. The first number I read aroused in me a great regret for all my blind waste of energy. I may not tell a hundredth part of what I learned from THE EDITOR, but I may say that it taught me how to solve the stamp and landlady problems by means of hackwork. It taught me the market for hackwork and the prices I might expect. So I was enabled to do a certain quantity of hack each month, enough to pay expenses,



and to devote the rest of my time to serious efforts, which are always hazardous financial undertakings. X

In closing this brief narrative of experience, let me give a few painfully acquired generalizations. Don't quit your job in order to write unless there is none dependent upon you. Fiction pays best of all, and when it is of a fair quality is more easily sold. A good joke will sell quicker than a good poem, and, measured in sweat and blood, will bring better remuneration. Avoid the unhappy ending, the harsh, the brutal, the tragic, the horrible—if you care to see in print the things you write. (In this connection don't do as I do, but do as I say.)

Humor is the hardest to write, easiest to sell, and best rewarded. There are only a few who are able to do it. If you are able, do it by all means. You will find it a Klondike and a Rand rolled into one. Look at Mark Twain.

Don't dash off a six-thousand-word story before breakfast. Don't write too much. Concentrate your sweat on one story, rather than dissipate it over a dozen. Don't loaf and invite inspiration; light out after it with a club, and if you don't get it you will none the less get something that looks remarkably like it. Set yourself a "stint," and see that you do that "stint" each day; you will have more words to your credit at the end of the year.

Study the tricks of the writers who have arrived. They have mastered the tools with which you are cutting your fingers. They are doing things, and their work bears the internal evidence of how it is done. Don't wait for some good Samaritan to tell you, but dig it out for yourself.

See that your pores are open and your digestion is good. That is, I am confident, the most important rule of all. And don't fling Carlyle in my teeth, please.

Keep a notebook. Travel with it, eat with it, sleep with it. Slap into it every stray thought that flutters up into your brain. Cheap paper is less perishable than gray matter, and lead pencil markings endure longer than memory.

And work. Spell it in capital letters, WORK. WORK all the time. Find out about this earth, this universe; this force and matter, and the spirit that glimmers up through force and matter from the maggot to Godhead. And by all this I mean WORK for a philosophy of life. It does not hurt how wrong your philosophy of life may be, so long as you have one and have it well.



The three great things are: GOOD HEALTH; WORK; and a PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE. I may add, nay, must add, a fourth—SINCERITY. Without this, the other three are without avail; with it you may cleave to greatness and sit among the giants.

# THE EDITOR

A JOURNAL OF INFORMATION FOR WRITERS

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## EACH NUMBER CONTAINS :

Contributions of prominent writers	Notices of other publications, and—
Hints on how to write	What they want
Hints on what to write	When they want it
Hints on preparing manuscript	What they can't use
Hints on the selling of it	What they pay for
Notices of all prize competitions	What they don't pay for
Notices of suspended publications	When they pay
Notices of new publications	How much they pay
Notices of consolidations	How they treat writers
	What publications pay promptly
	What publications do not pay promptly
	What publications do not pay at all
	Changes in ownership
	Changes of address

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**T**HIS little book is for writers. If you write, or if you have an itching to write, we want to talk to you. We know some things that may interest you, and we shall try to put them in such a chatty form that you will forget you are reading an advertisement, until occasionally we break in and say, "Good morning, have you used *THE EDITOR*?"

*THE EDITOR*, we may explain, is a journal of information for literary workers. It is not at all pretentious, and not at all dull. It is a matter-of-fact little magazine, always filled with good, readable articles on the technique of writing. Sometimes they are contributed by authors and sometimes by editors. You will always find something between the covers of the magazine that drives you to work, that spurs you to greater efforts, that puts you on the high road to success. A certain woman once complained that it was "brutally practical." It is. We know a writer who bought a copy, and turned a "brutally practical" item he read in it into a thirty-

dollar check. This is true, because we saw his story and sent a receipt for his subscription.

Not so many years ago, we entered a subscription from a man out in California. We had never seen his name in the magazines, but we had faith in him, as we have in all honest workers. One day we found a story of his in a magazine, and presently another, and another, till we came to look for them regularly. We were immensely pleased at his success, and down in one corner of our heart we were egotistically certain that our magazine had been one of its factors. We never dared voice our belief, it is true, but we cherished it for our own satisfaction. One morning, in our mail, we found a letter from him. "When I subscribed," he wrote, "I had a goodly file of manuscripts laid away. Through your help I have disposed of the major portion." It was signed in that great scrawling hand that so many editors know—Jack London.

If you want to follow the trail blazed by Mr. London, you should go about it by studying the profession. We pride ourselves on the fact that *THE EDITOR* is a good, live text-book. It is a pretty poor sort of a teacher, you know, who never sees an educational journal; new methods and systems are cropping out constantly. No doctor dares get behind in his profession. No woman exactly likes to be a year late in the fashions. And no writer—we leave this to you—likes to send a manuscript to a magazine that suspended a few months ago; nor allow an article to go unread that may cover just the point on which his or her rejections cling. The writer wants hints, helps, and as many of them as possible; everybody does. Just at this minute we cannot recall a magazine that better meets this want than *THE EDITOR*.

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## THE EDITOR LITERARY BUREAU

The literary bureau of *The Editor* came into existence back in 1895. We never kept count of the manuscripts we have read in that time, but we pass upon hundreds each year. Sometimes we tell a writer that the waste-basket is the best place for his manuscript; sometimes we tell him to send it on to *Harper's* and *The Century* and the rest of the big magazines. We know "bureaus" that tell an author everything he sends in is salable literature. None that was in existence in 1895 is still living.

We have read a great number of manuscripts, and we have come to have a pretty clear idea of the requirements of a salable story, article or poem. We know what it is worth better than the writer does. Moreover, we are not afraid to tell him frankly just what degree of merit it may have. People send us stories and ask if they are good enough for *Harper's* or *The Century*. If we find that they are not, we say so honestly, and advise the newspapers, or even the waste-basket. People send us stories, and ask if they are too good for the daily papers. If we find that they are, we say so gladly, and advise the best magazines. We have been the means of placing stories with the highest class publication of the country. We do not say it in a bragging spirit, but to offset some of the declarations of our enemies, the "fake" bureaus.

When we first began to write, we should have given a good deal for a critical estimate of the value of our stories. There is a certain satisfaction in knowing whether you are writing literature or tommy-rot. If you know the markets for which your work is adapted, you can get along without us. But we never yet saw an author who had the time to make a careful and continuous study of the literary market. That is precisely what we do; we are experts in this line, just as men on the stock exchange are experts in the commercial market.

### HOW TO JUDGE LITERARY BUREAUS

When you get a glittering prospectus from a company that promises to make you an author of world-wide reputation, ask yourself these questions:

1. Have the men who form the bureau ever written anything themselves?
2. Have they had years of experience in the work of criticising and revising?

3. Have they ever accomplished anything?

4. Has the bureau any standing among editors and publishers?

Now, after you have drawn the blue pencil through the glittering generalities of their statements, study our reasons for believing we are warranted in expecting and deserving your patronage.

1. Not an editor in our employ is an editor alone: every man has written and published his own stories in high class magazines; every man has published his own books through the best houses in America.

2. *The Editor Literary Bureau* has been before the public for over ten years. During the whole period of its existence it has handled more work than any other, and has passed upon matter that later appeared in the very best magazines and between the covers of the books of the very best publishing houses.

3. It has placed books with publishers; as an example we cite "Stringtown on the Pike," by John Uri Lloyd, which was one of the most popular

stories of the day. It has secured words of approval for its services from the very best writers in America. Says Jack London: "When I subscribed for your magazine I had a goodly file of manuscripts laid away. Through your help I have disposed of the major portion."

4. The editors of the leading magazines recommend *The Editor Literary Bureau*. Although not at liberty to mention names, we can convince any doubting patron. One publication that has not asked us to refrain from mentioning it is *Munsey's*, which has directed more than one writer to us during the past few months.

We invite comparisons on this basis with any other company in this country doing work of this nature.

## RATE SCHEDULE

For the critical examination of a prose manuscript of less than 5,000 words, including the pointing out of errors, weak constructions of all kinds; comments on unity, coherence, proportion, style, etc.; suggestions as to strengthening certain portions, or rewriting the whole; a list of from six to ten magazines, journals, syndicates, newspapers, etc., for which story or articles is best adapted, \$1.00.

For the critical examination of a short poem of less than twenty-five lines, including comment on rhyme, rhythm, meter, thought, and treatment, 50 cents.

For prose manuscripts exceeding 5,000 words, 20 cents a thousand words or fraction thereof.

For poems exceeding twenty-five lines, 50 cents for every twenty-five lines or fraction thereof.

For typewriting prose manuscripts, neatly, correctly, promptly, on best manuscript paper, 50 cents a thousand words or fraction thereof. For typewriting manuscripts exceeding 10,000 words, 40 cents a thousand words or fraction thereof.

For typewriting poems of twenty-five lines, 50 cents. For typewriting poems exceeding twenty-five lines, five cents for each five lines or fraction thereof over the first twenty-five lines.

Our work is the most careful and conscientious of any in this country. We are neither "fakes," praising everything, nor "old fogies," slipped into a rut. Moreover, we are not afraid to say exactly what we think; our work is eminently honest and candid.

We handle more manuscripts than any other literary bureau in America. There are two reasons:

1. We are brutally frank—critically helpful. If a patron's work is not up to the selling standard, we say so without hesitation. It then rests with him to follow our suggestions and make it so, or drop out of the race. We have spurred on many who had not realized their own faults.

2. We are well into our twelfth year of continuous work; we know *how* to criticise.

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By **LESLIE W. QUIRK**

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"The material in the following pages is a series of suggestive talks rather than a scholarly discourse. I leave to others the discussion of polish, atmosphere, and artistic handling; I take for my theme the writing of a short story that will sell.

"There are many writers throughout the country, with good educations, clear brains, and with the ambition to see their work in print, who are failing merely because they are not familiar with the technique of the short story. It is to these that I would appeal.

"In the following pages, therefore, I have aimed above all else to be practical. I have written in the first person, without even the shield of the editorial 'we.' I have addressed my reader directly, in a desire to impress upon his mind the fundamental requisites of a salable short story. In a word, I have endeavored to point out, more or less systematically, every step by which an idea may be converted into a short story, fit to appear between the covers of a reputable magazine."

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First Person Stories—Letters and Diaries—The Inanimate Narrator—Dialect Sketches—Narration Within Narration—Proper Method of Telling a Story—Pitfalls to Avoid—Keystone of Style.

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The Editorial Method of Determining the Value of a Story—Necessity of Interesting at the Outset—Common Faults—Ideal Introduction—Hints for Strengthening Weak Introductions—Possibilities of Suggestion—Direct Discourse—Contrast Between Trite and Fresh Introductions—Retrospection.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STORY PROPER

Definition of Ideal Short Story—How It Differs from Novel—Length—Unity—Lapse of Time—Padding—Proper Way to Tell Short Story—Common Errors—Fitting Story to Market—Conversation *versus* Description—Holding Quality—Whetting Reader's Appetite.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND CLIMAX

Dropping the Curtain—Amateurs' Methods and Why They Fail—What Climax Accomplishes—Relation of Conclusion and Climax—Surprise Stories—True Stories—Climax Really Story Itself—Editorial View of Conclusion.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PREPARATION OF THE MANUSCRIPT

Hiding Marks of Workmanship—Reason Editors Prefer Type-written Manuscript—Spacing on Machine—How to Estimate Number of Words—Where to Place Address and Nom-de-Plume—Proper Appearance of First Page—Soiled Manuscripts—Quality and Size of Paper—Accompanying Note.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PLACING OF THE STORY

An Art in Itself—Market Points to be Studied—Why Certain Stories Fit Certain Publications—Misfit Stories—Judging One's Own Work—How to Discover Defects and Crudities—Literary Critics—Two Elements of Timeliness—Place for Every Story—Some of the Markets—Bull-Dog Tenacity of Sticking to It.

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## CONTENTS

Preface	Juvenile Publications
The Editor Literary Bureau	Literary Monthlies
Special Copyright Notice	Literary Weeklies
Advertising Journals	Magazines for Authors
Agricultural and Horticultural	Matrimonial Journals
Book Publishers	Newspapers
Biography, Genealogy, etc.	Occultism and Theosophy
Camera Papers	Pet Animals
Clairvoyancy, Palmistry, etc.	Printers' Journals
Class and Technical Journals	Play Publishers
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Household Journals	Religious Papers
Humorous	Sporting Journals
Jewish Journals	Syndicates
Undertaking, Embalming, etc.	

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